Emergency Contact Redux

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/49217968.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham & Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, the whole gang basically, Franklyn Froideveaux, Franklyn isn't dead because he's pathetic and needy and I get that, Tobias isn't dead either, Nor is Katz
Additional Tags:	Amnesia, always love at first sight, Dark Will, Funny
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of Emergency Contact
Stats:	Published: 2023-08-09 Updated: 2024-01-22 Words: 26,065 Chapters: 13/?

Emergency Contact Redux

by mouemouth

Summary

I lost focus on my original story and tried to blend too many tropes together which made my story a directionless, albeit funny, mess. So I'm trying to make amends. Everything up to Chapter 6 is exactly the same.

This is the story of an amnesiac Hannibal falling in love with a fresh-out-of-BSHCI and vindictive Will Graham.

Chapter 1

Hannibal woke to the beeping sound of hospital monitors and an IV stuck in his hand.

The doctor had asked him for his name and his address, but Hannibal could not seem to recall that information. Strangely, it did not seem to really bother him. A concerned citizen had found Hannibal unconscious with an apparent head injury but without any sort of identification on him. However, it didn't take long until one of the nurses at the hospital recognized him and was able to find his file. The hospital called his emergency contact and informed Hannibal that a man by the name of 'Will Graham' would be coming along with his boss.

Curious that a man would bring his boss along to visit someone at the hospital. Perhaps they were all colleagues? Though Hannibal found it odd that he'd list a coworker as his emergency contact. A workplace romance perhaps?

Hannibal was reading a magazine when they entered. It took everything for Hannibal not to react when *he* entered; the dark curly hair on the face of a blue eyed beauty. Face showing an ever-changing kaleidoscope of emotions: concern, confusion, amusement, and an intense emotion that seemed to simultaneously be both love and hate. But Hannibal could not help his eyes' wandering gaze as it stay pinned to that man while briefly darting to the dark-skinned larger man that had entered first.

"Doctor Lecter," the darker man started, "do you remember anything about what happened?"

Prising his eyes from *him*, Hannibal calmly replied, "Unfortunately, though I can still recall all my medical knowledge and literary allusions, it appears that I've lost all my personal memories, including everyone I seemed to know. May I ask you your names?"

The dark man sighed and glanced at the smaller man by his side, the other man briefly made eye contact with him, before looking back at Hannibal, "I am Jack Crawford, head of the FBI's BAU department and this is special agent Will Graham."

The other man fidgeted and finally looked up to look Hannibal in the eyes, and asked, as if checking whether or not he was telling the truth, “You don’t remember what you are? Where you live?”

Interesting choice of words: ‘what’, not ‘who’.

“Doctor Chen has informed me that my name is Doctor Hannibal Lecter and that I was a former surgeon but now currently practicing as a psychiatrist. According to my file, I reside in Baltimore, Maryland.”

The beautiful man was searching Hannibal’s eyes intently, as if reading him. Just how well do they know each other that he can recognize Hannibal’s tells? Still, despite knowing that Will had the ability to expose him - not that Hannibal knew what secrets he had to keep - he found himself wanting to keep those blue eyes focused on him.

Continuing, Hannibal lamented, “However, those were facts only recently told to me. I cannot seem to remember those memories of that life, that person: Doctor Hannibal Lecter.”

Will snorted and Jack took a deep breath.

“I’m going to go get the doctor and let him know you’re up.” Jack announced.

Will nodded and turned away to look out a window, ignoring Hannibal who was watching him intently from the hospital bed.

As quietly as a jungle cat, Hannibal rose and prowled towards Will. After he had woken earlier, they had removed the IV and monitoring nodes and allowed him wear some pants underneath his breezy hospital gown.

His ‘emergency contact’ seemed to be under a roil of emotions as he stared, arms crossed, out the hospital window with a nice view of the parking lot. Who exactly was this Will Graham

and what was he to him? Were they lovers? Could he smell himself on him? What did Will Graham really smell like behind those dogs and bad aftershave?

Stepping silently behind Will, leaning just a few inches away from Will's nape, Hannibal inhaled, deeply.

With a snort and chuckle, the smaller man turned his head sideways, and said lightly, like it was a game, like something they had done before, "Did you just smell me?"

But he didn't flinch away, so neither did Hannibal, "Difficult to avoid," he said a bit huskily, trying to lean a bit closer.

Will sighed, and turned around to face Hannibal, leaning back against the ledge of the window with his arms still crossed, ducking his head, stared Hannibal in the eyes, and huffed, "So you really don't remember me?"

Was Will upset that Hannibal couldn't recall him due to the intimate nature of their relationship? Surely then, Will must be his lover. Or something even more than that. Husband perhaps? No ring though. Hannibal frowned.

He placed a hand on Will's upper arm and another on his nape, his thumb brushing the curls behind his ear, the other man tensed but did not back away, "Though I may not recall the details of our relationship," Hannibal said softly, thumb stroking Will's curls affectionately, "I still remember my feelings for you." And kissed him. Will let out a strangled cry which Hannibal took advantage of the open mouth and licked inside, savoring his taste. Bad coffee, processed foods, and, yet, still delicious.

"Doctor Lecter!" Jack's booming voice reprimanded.

"Hannibal!" A shriller voice cried out.

A cat call.

“I told you!” A higher pitched male voice further away said.

“Damn!” A more baritone voice cursed.

Will managed to push Hannibal off enough to break off the kiss, but Hannibal didn’t step any further back than half a step and still held Will in his hands. Will looked shocked and embarrassed, as if he hadn’t been expecting that kiss at all.

Hannibal turned to look at the offending voices, now that a crowd had now formed at the hospital door. There were 3 dressed in lab coats, judging by the smell of decay that lingered on them, they were obviously part of some forensics team, a small brunette woman that was gripping flowers so hard her knuckles were white, a bewildered Jack Crawford, and Dr. Chen who looked exhausted and indifferent.

Ignoring them, for Hannibal didn’t feel any spark of feeling towards any of them anyway, he turned to the only person who made him feel.

“Will, are we not lovers?” Hannibal asked as honestly as a puppy, head slightly cocked for effect just so.

The smaller man was still in his arms, trapped between the window and Hannibal, still mostly shielded from view by Hannibal’s broad back. Frozen in shock, Will looked like a deer caught in the headlights with his big blue eyes opened wide.

“No,” a shrill voice called out again, “But we are!”

She sounded angry and a little hysterical.

“Wait, what?” A shocked female voice asked.

“Told you so! Ha!” The baritone male jeered.

“Silence!” Jack boomed over them.

Hannibal turned his head to look upon the speaker; the small brunette woman with bright blue eyes. He took half a second to let his eyes flicker over her her up before turning back to Will, staring much longer at the young man before letting out a deflated, “Oh.”

The disappointment was palpable.

It was Will who first roused, clearing his throat and struggling to get out and around Hannibal’s rigid grip on him. And then all hell broke loose.

“What?!” The brunette woman practically shrieked now.

To which Will flinched and Hannibal instinctively wanted to protect him despite his supposed relationship with that crude woman. It was then that all eight people in the small hospital room decided to move and speak all at the same time.

In the midst of all this commotion, hands tugging every which way, that a small blonde woman dressed in an elegant skirt and blouse walked in unnoticed. Standing in her red high heels, she observed the scene, sighed, and pulled out the champagne bottle from her purse along with a glass and popped it open. The champagne had been brought in an attempt to stimulate Hannibal’s palate and hopefully his memory, but, fuck it, she needed a drink *now.*

By the time everyone had stopped moving to find out where that noise had come from, Bedelia was already sitting in a chair with her legs crossed and was refilling her glass. Preparing herself for the shit storm that was about to unfold. Hannibal was such a dramatic bitch sometimes.

Hannibal appeared to be attempting to hold on to Will, who Jack also seemed to be in the process of trying to retrieve, while Will looked as if he was just trying to get as far away from

everyone as possible. Alana was reaching out to Hannibal with an angry look as Beverly and Price tried to hold her back as Zeller egged everyone on.

Bedelia took a sip of her champagne and acted as if she was startled to see everyone's eyes on her, "No, please, continue." She gestured with her hand, taking another sip again.

"Ah, Doctor Du Maurier, so glad you could come. As Hannibal's psychiatrist-", Dr. Chen started before she was cut off by an almost sitcom comical chorus of voices:

"Psychiatrist?!" Everyone, including Hannibal, asked in varying intonations at the same time.

-

Bedelia took a deep breath and big swig of her champagne, she was going to need it to get through a group therapy session with Hannibal and … grievances. Alana wanted to have a therapy session with just Hannibal but the man refused to let Will out of his sight. Just as well as it was very likely Will would've bolted.

So, in that same hospital room, Hannibal sat on the hospital bed, Alana in one of the chairs, Bedelia with her bottle of champagne, and Will pacing around the corners.

"Alana," Bedelia selected as it was clear she was the most obviously emotional one, "would you like to begin and tell me what happened?"

"Hannibal kissed Will." Alana blurted out angrily.

"About time*,"* Bedelia muttered under her breath as she reached for her champagne.

Will snapped around with an expression that said, '*What did you just say?'*

But Bedelia cleared her throat, took a sip, and said in a louder voice, “And this makes you upset…?”

“Yes,” Alana said exasperated, not having noticed the exchange, “because I’m Hannibal’s girlfriend.”

Are you really? Bedelia wondered. Instead, she asked, “Ms. Bloom, how long have you known Hannibal?”

“Um, I’ve known him since med school, so about 12 years?”

“And in that time, have you ever known Hannibal to be in a relationship?”

At this, Alana’s anger faltered, “Well, I guess- he haven’t had - he- he has ‘affairs’.”

“Have you and Hannibal ever had the conversation that you two were in an exclusive relationship?”

“Well, no, not exactly- I just assumed that -“

Bedelia went in for the kill. There was really no easy way to tell the girl that she was fucking the devil. “Do you think that perhaps you misjudged the nature of your relationship with Hannibal?”

Vulnerable, Alana lashed out, “Well, Hannibal is Will’s psychiatrist! This behavior is highly unethical.”

Bedelia fought the urge to roll her eyes. This woman has no idea where Hannibal’s view on ethics really lie.

“Hannibal,” Bedelia addressed him now, “what do you think of breaching the doctor-patient relationship with Will Graham?”

“Well, as someone who currently have no memories of any of you and nothing of my past, all I can say is that I’d happily let them revoke my medical license if I can have a more than doctor-patient relationship with Will.” Hannibal said honestly, he had no reason to lie. Alana was annoying and he only wanted Will.

Will and Alana looked at Hannibal incredulously, mouths agape. Alana darted a look at Will who flushed and turned back to stare out the window.

“He tried to have you killed,” Alana hissed, looking upset at all of them.

“Allegedly,” Bedelia added.

Hannibal simply shrugged and said, “Perhaps I deserved it.”

At that Will turned and looked at Hannibal. Seeing that he had caught his beloved’s attention with his honesty, Hannibal smiled fondly back. At which Will blushed and broke off eye contact.

Alana, seeing Hannibal’s besotted exchange, looked wild with hurt rage. She felt like a fool. “I was so blind,” she seethed. “You knew that Will liked me so you gaslit me. You fucked me to take me off the table and isolate Will so you could have him all to yourself. You used me.”

Honestly, Hannibal could care less what this Alana person thinks, “I accept all possibilities of my previous actions but I cannot say for certain whether or not any of it is accurate.”

Seeing Hannibal’s bored look, Bedelia sighed and reminded, “We are here to talk about the recent events and what is to happen in the future. It would be unproductive to bring up Hannibal’s past doings as the man himself is not ‘present’ to defend or comment appropriately.”

“Then what am I doing here?” Alana shrieked.

Hannibal and Bedelia shared a look and Bedelia sighed, again, “If I recall, Ms. Bloom, you demanded to be included in this session.” She took a sip, “This isn’t couples therapy.”

The indifference in the room towards Alana was almost painful.

“What? I’m just excess baggage?”

No one said anything.

“That’s it! Fine! I’m leaving!” And stormed out, looking back as if hoping someone would stop her. No one did. Though Will did have an agonized expression on his face as she left.

Hannibal took a deep breath and breathed out, as if saying, ‘thank god that’s over’, and said, “Now, where were we?”

Without missing a beat, Bedelia asked, “Why do you think you felt compelled to kiss Will Graham now that you know a bit of your past history instead of Alana - someone you recently had sexual relations with?”

“There was an indescribable feeling the moment I saw Will, despite not knowing who he was. When he spoke to me, I could sense that he could see me, know me. I thought for certain that someone who beautiful as he and was so close to me had to be my partner. Will was also listed as my emergency contact. Sadly, it appears I was wrong as to the nature of our relationship.”

To which Hannibal actually looked sad, Bedelia had to give him credit for that.

“And, Will, how does it make you feel to know that Hannibal has listed you as his ‘emergency contact’, a man who you’ve known for less than 10 months instead of Alana who he’s known for more than 10 years?”

It took a moment, as Will digested Bedelia’s words until he finally spoke, “Talks a lot about me huh?”

You have no idea, Bedelia thought to herself and waited for Will to continue.

“Maybe he just likes me more,” Will teased, deflecting.

Bedelia smiled, she was used to evasiveness after years of therapy with Hannibal, “That much is evident.”

Will blushed and fidgeted, clearly uncomfortable, and sighed, “I don’t know, confused? Not sure why he trusts me? Why don’t you ask him how he feels? He’s the one who picked me.”

“Alright, Hannibal, how do you feel about Will Graham?”

Smiling as if answering his favorite question, “There are some feelings that transcend facts and details. Being immediately drawn to Will in such a fervid manner leads me to believe that my ‘predecessor’ felt the same way the first time as well. Looking upon Will’s visage makes me feel as if my memory is expendable, that all I need is to look upon his face to recall who I am…” As Hannibal began to wax poetic about the man that is Will Graham.

“This is impossible!” Will exclaims in the middle of Hannibal’s nearly 10-minute dissertation on his love for Will Graham. Turning to look at Bedelia who was currently halfway finished with the champagne bottle and rather tipsy. “This is meaningless without his memories, his past… indiscretions… I mean, you know what he is!” Will gestured to an innocent looking Hannibal - one that has no schemes or even thoughts of schemes, his entire world seemed to be that very moment and of Will.

Bedelia sighed and raised a glass, “This is why I’m drinking. Out of all the people to whom amnesia could have befallen, the man with a mind palace. And empty shelves.”

“Ugh, I can’t even get mad at him. It’s like kicking a baby.” Will groans, running his fingers through his hair. “What am I even supposed to do?”

Bedelia takes another sip, and readjusts her seat slightly, “Well, Hannibal can be released but he must be signed off into someone’s care. And given that you are his emergency contact, the doctor has suggested that Hannibal stay with you for a couple of weeks just to make sure he’s fine and as he regains his memory … or not.” She sips. “Who knows? Amnesia recovery is not an exact science.”

“Wait, what?” Will said, blinked furiously, horrified, and holding out his hand as if he could physically stop the conversation.

Hannibal looked thrilled.

Chapter 2

The plan was all going awry! There was no point in going through with his Reckoning if Hannibal doesn't even remember what he did to deserve it. There had been no way for Will to get out of this 'guardianship/nurse/emergency contact' role, especially since Hannibal had publicly ousted Alana and saved Jack Crawford's wife.

Will had been planting the seed that Hannibal was the Chesapeake Ripper in Jack's mind when, out of nowhere, Hannibal goes and **stops** someone from killing themself. Now that Hannibal is so obviously infatuated with Will, there was no way that Jack would believe him now. Not to mention that Hannibal doesn't even remember his serial killing ways so it'd be impossible to convict someone with no evidence and no witnesses without a confession. If this was some brutally clever way to get out of a mass murder charge, then Will sure has been bamboozled. He had no idea what his next move should be. It'd be like if a baseball game was cancelled in the middle of the 6th inning because a spaceship had landed in the outfield!

So, for now, Will had no choice but to play the 'but keep your enemies closer' strategy. After Hannibal got discharged from the hospital, Will dropped Hannibal off at his house to get situated while he went to Wolf Trap to get his dogs and belongings. As Hannibal perused the halls of this large house that was his, he objectively appreciated its interior design and choice of artwork. There was nothing he didn't approve of, unsurprisingly, as he *technically did* picked them all out, even if he had no memory of it.

In the end, Will and his dogs ended up moving in, TEMPORARILY (Will told himself in big block letters), to Hannibal's home instead. It was a non-negotiable for Will to have his dogs, and Hannibal acquiesced. However, in Hannibal's defense, he didn't know Will had 7 dogs, otherwise he may have put up a bit more of a fight. Like any other person, when someone says 'I'm bringing my dogs', he assumed that they will be bringing 2 or 3, or, the occasional 4 (granted if they were all small dogs), not more than half a dozen.

When Hannibal had held the door for Will, he stood in muted shock as the 7 dogs followed through. Admittedly, Hannibal was surprised at the number of dogs but, he is, if not nothing else, a man of his word. And he agreed to dogs, and so he got… dogs.

And Will.

After the dogs got situated in their room with their various dog beds, which Hannibal allowed for in the study in front of the fireplace, Hannibal wanted to show Will where *his* sleeping arrangements lay.

"Will, would you like to see your accommodations?" Hannibal asked.

Looking up at Hannibal from where he was arranging one of the dog beds closer to the fireplace, Will shrugged and agreed, "Sure."

With an oddly dark twinkle in his eye, Hannibal smiled without moving his lips and said, “Please, then, follow me this way.”

As Hannibal led Will upstairs, Will shouldering his duffle bag containing no more than 3 days worth of clothing, convinced that he and his dogs would wear out their welcome by week’s end, they passed by no less than 3 closed doors before arriving at a set double doors at the end of the hall.

“And this is the master bedroom,” Hannibal gestured and placed both hands on the two door knobs and turned the handles to dramatically invite Will inside the ridiculously spacious bedroom.

It was obvious that the master bedroom was Hannibal’s bedroom, so Will didn’t bother to set his duffle bag down, thinking it’d be a brief flyby. However, it seemed that Hannibal had a different intention.

Walking further into the bedroom, Hannibal proceeded to give Will a tour of the bedroom.

“A suit of samurai armor; appears to be authentic from the Edo period.” The amnesiac described, gesturing to the full set of the armor near the entrance.

Frowning, Will simply replied, “Okay…” Wondering where this was going.

Walking further in, Hannibal paused by the wall,“Dimmable lights for setting different moods.”

Narrowing his eyes suspiciously, Will grunted, “How romantic.”

“Two walk in closets. Spacious enough for your belongings as well, Will.”

“They’re both full of your plaid suits.”

Leading further in to a very large bathroom decorated in white marble and gold,“The bathroom has double sinks where two people can simultaneously brush their teeth together.”

“I prefer to brush alone.” Will huffed.

Ignoring Will’s comment, Hannibal continued the bathroom tour, “A large tub that can fit more than one.”

“Probably can wash 3 dogs at the same time in there.”

At that Hannibal cringed imperceptibly but forged on, leading back out to the bedroom, “There is a California King bed with silk sheets, wide enough to fit a couple of grown men comfortably.”

Raising his eyebrow, Will looked at Hannibal, “That’s nice bed **Doctor** Lecter. I hope that *my* bed is comfortable enough to fit **one** grown man.”

Hannibal’s lips pointedly turned downwards for less than half a second before silently sighing, “Follow me to the guest bedroom.”

X

After dinner, which was a rather simple dish of chicken paillard with curried oyster mushrooms, Hannibal, Will and the dogs retired to the study for a digestifs.

“Will,” Hannibal asked from his desk, “When’s your birthday?”

Will was getting the dogs settled into their beds and answered without thinking, “June 19th,” he said petting Winston fondly on the head, his hand stuttered for a moment, “Wait, why?”

“Didn’t work,” Hannibal muttered to himself. “Birth year?” He asked.

Frowning, Will rose and walked over to Hannibal, who he realized had found his cell phone and was currently trying to unlock it.

“You don’t have Face ID or Touch ID set up?”

Hannibal looked up with a questioning look.

“Of course not,” Will mumbled to himself, “You wouldn’t want anyone collecting your biometric data.”

“It says that I have one more attempt before my data is permanently erased.”

Will’s heart jumped for a moment, there could be incriminating evidence on Hannibal’s phone! He had to get that phone unlocked! “What other dates did you try?”

“My birthday,”

Will made a face as if saying, *Really? That’s like asking to get hacked.* But then he remembered that Hannibal was a narcissist with a huge ego so his birthday could be possible.

Hannibal shrugged, “The Golden Ratio.”

Will thought to himself, *Of course, the man was obsessed with perfection.*

“The line number of my favorite stanza in Dante’s Inferno.”

Okay, Renaissance man.

“The measurements for a perfect crème brulee.”

Yep, food.

“The most melodic chord.”

Eh, that’s a bit subjective, but I’ll let it slide.

“The year the Primavera was painted.”

The Primavera? Got to look that one up later.

“Anything else?” Will asked.

“Your birthday.” Hannibal complied, “What was the date when we first met?”

“Huh?” Will frowned, “That’s definitely not it.” He only had one more shot at this and he had to make sure he gets into Hannibal’s phone.

“Humor me Will.”

“What- what about that church in Italy?”

“The Norman Chapel? Unlikely.” Hannibal laced his fingers together and looked up at Will who had come to hover over his shoulder while he sat at the desk attempting to unlock his phone. He likes Will being close like this. Hannibal smiles, “Please, Will,” he tries again, “What was the date when we first met?”

Will bit his lip nervously, did he really want to hinge his only chance at procuring hard evidence against the Chesapeake Ripper on an amnesiac’s guess? Only one way to find out.

Will sighed heavily, “April 4th.”

Hannibal gave Will a knowing look.

“Don’t read into that,” Will added quickly, “I have an eidetic memory, I remember everything.” Not dwelling on the irony that he was basically telling a man with no memories that he had too many memories.

Much to Will's relief, Hannibal didn't say anything further. Will held his breath as he watched as the older man tap in those numbers:

0 - 4 - 0 - 4

The lock icon slid open.

Who knew the cannibal was such a romantic?

Will's breath hitched for a moment and he struggled to hold himself back from reaching out snatching the phone out of Hannibal's hands to look through it.

But Hannibal noticed anyway and bemusedly held out his phone for Will to take.

Will flushed, damn, even without his memories, Hannibal could still read him like a book. The only person that could.

He swallowed, "I- I just wanted to see if we could figure out more details about what happened that night." He lied badly but took the phone anyway. There was no way he was going to miss any opportunity for the possibility of evidence.

Hannibal didn't have many apps on his phone, but there was no way to search through them all with Hannibal looking over his shoulder. There were 49 missed calls, 63 text messages, and 18 voicemails. Most of them were from patients but scrolling through Hannibal's messages Will recognized some of the people:

Jack Crawford - FBI

[Let me know if there is anything you need assistance with.]

Dr. Alana Bloom - Psychiatrist

[Where are you? Is everything ok? Call me?]

Dr. Bedelia du Maurier - Psychiatrist

[Confirmed]

Jo Yoshiko - Tailor

[Suit ready Tues after 3.]

Franklyn Froideveaux - Patient

[Hi Hannibal! 👋👋 How's it going? 👨‍⚕️ 😅 I was just shopping for cheeses and I found this new camembert at ....]

Georgiana Papele - Patient

[Dr. Lecter, I am so sorry, but I need to reschedule our upcoming appointment.]

Angela Komeda - Heiress

[We missed you at the theatre (AGAIN) last Friday. Are you hiding us from your lover? 😜]

And Will's fingers paused for a moment when he recognized a familiar image on the ID icon next to a contact simply labeled, '**Mongoose'**. Beside the icon, was a preview of the last words he had texted Hannibal, "k". His message had been buried down towards the bottom because both men preferred to either talk in person or over the phone.

But it wasn't the endearing nickname that had Will gripping the phone tighter, it was the contact photo. It was fucking close up of Will's being transported outside of the BHSCI wearing the clear plastic mask. Image courtesy of Freddie Lounds of course.

Will gritted his teeth and practically growled.

"How fiercely adorable you look in that mask," Hannibal commented from behind Will's shoulder where he had been watching, "I understand now why I call you Mongoose. Like the mongoose -"

"'Under the house when the snakes slither by,'" Will finished for him. "Yeah, yeah, you said that before." The younger man bit out.

Hannibal appraised his snarling mongoose, who seemed to suddenly be baring his teeth after seeing his own contact photo in Hannnibal's cell phone, "Was this part of a Halloween costume?"

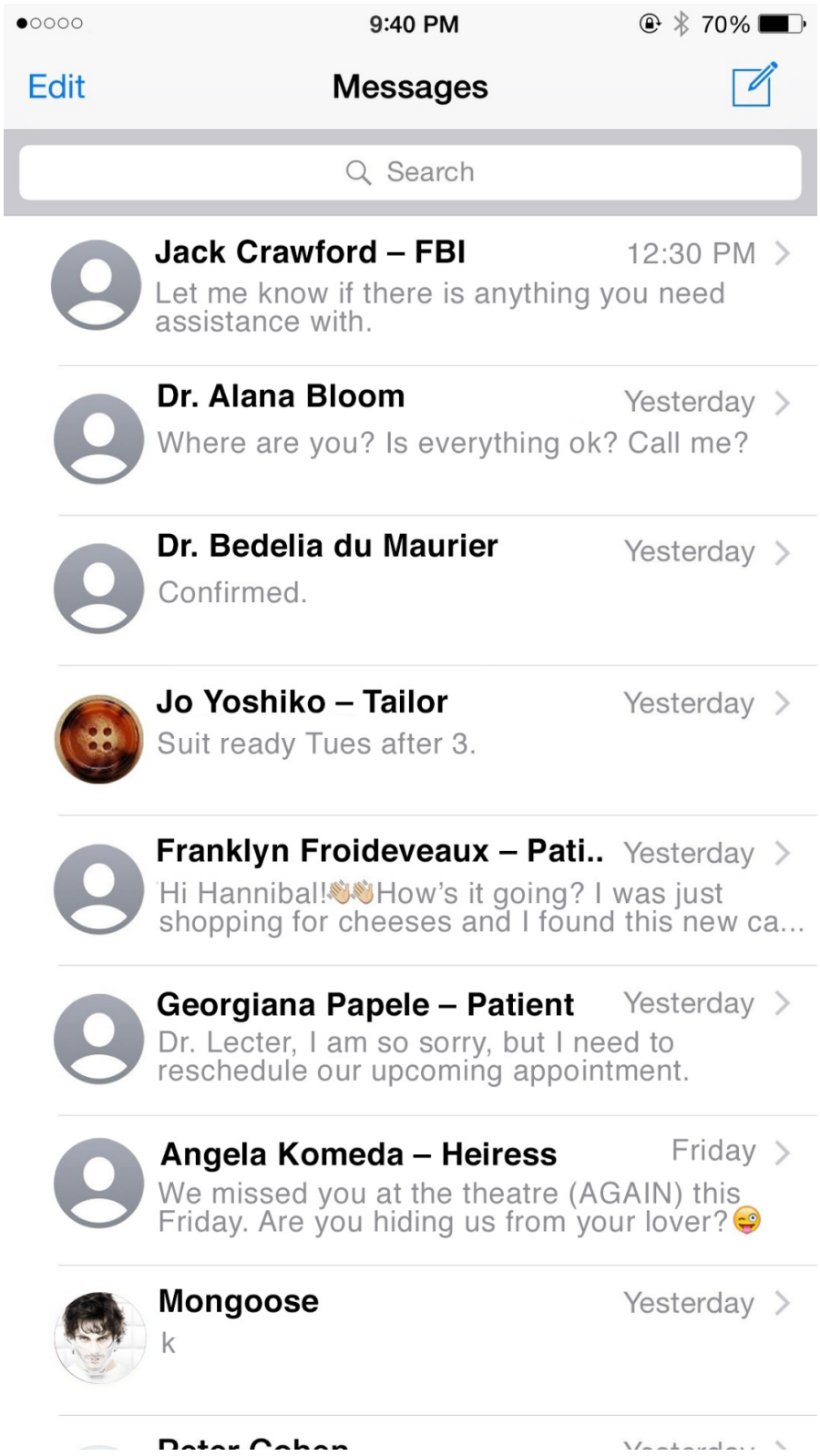
Will blinked several times at that question, thrown off guard as to what to feel about it.

What. The. Fucking. Fuck. How the fuck is he even supposed to react to that? Uh, no, that was taken from when I was sent to the fucking insane asylum when you let my brain burn, fucked with my encephalitis, led everyone think I was crazy, and framed me for your murders! Not that you fucking even remember since you got motherfucking amnesia and don't even remember doing any of that shit! The friggin' nerve of this guy! Ugh! I can't even get upset at him cause then I'd have to explain why I'm upset and basically tell him he's a serial killer. Will rolled his eyes internally.

There was no point in wasting his breath and energy to reprimand Hannibal for something he has no memory of. So, instead, Will just glared at Hannibal, pushed the cell phone back into the older man's hands and walked away with a curt, "Good night Doctor Lecter."

Hannibal took the sudden change in Will's turbulent emotions like a pilot navigating an arctic storm, unfazed, and called out after him, "Do you still have the mask Will?"

THANK YOU @nowsaguaro for making this little treat for this fic!


9:40 PM
70%
Edit
Messages
Search
Jack Crawford – FBI
12:30 PM
Let me know if there is anything you need assistance with.
Dr. Alana Bloom
Yesterday
Where are you? Is everything ok? Call me?
Dr. Bedelia du Maurier
Yesterday
Confirmed.
Jo Yoshiko – Tailor
Yesterday
Suit ready Tues after 3.
Franklyn Froideveaux – Pati..
Yesterday
Hi Hannibal!👋🏻👋🏻How's it going? I was just shopping for cheeses and I found this new ca...
Georgiana Papele – Patient
Yesterday
Dr. Lecter, I am so sorry, but I need to reschedule our upcoming appointment.
Angela Komeda – Heiress
Friday
We missed you at the theatre (AGAIN) this Friday. Are you hiding us from your lover?😜
Mongoose
Yesterday
k

Chapter 3

Hannibal the amnesiac awoke the next morning to the intoxicating scent of rainwater, sage, and Will; musky, slightly floral, and tinged with fear. Along with the faint sounds of trickling water, he knew that his grumpy Quantico professor was taking a shower. Which meant that it was time for Hannibal to get up and start making breakfast for his beloved. Judging from their kiss, the professor clearly has not been eating well.

Though, Hannibal mused as he opened the refrigerator door, the dogs certainly do. As he curiously opened the Tupperware container with a masking tape date label denoting of when it had been made. Inhaling deeply, Hannibal could smell chicken, carrots, zucchini, peas, spinach, brown rice.

Something nutritious to start the day, Hannibal thought to himself as he pulled various ingredients out of the refrigerator.

Just as Hannibal pulled the eggs out, he heard Will stumbling down with the janglin of several leashes. As Will rounded the corner past the kitchen, more out of politeness than rather desire to greet Hannibal, he awkwardly announced, “I’m taking the dogs for a walk.”

Despite Will’s obvious discomfort at being in an unfamiliar home, Hannibal could only see the twitchy, sleep-deprived younger man through rose-colored glasses. And to Hannibal, Will looked like a puzzle he longed to solve, a desire to get inside not only his body but also his mind.

Will frowned after Hannibal spent half a second too long frozen.

“I’ll have breakfast ready when you get back.” Hannibal tried to recover with.

Will just narrowed his eyes suspiciously and nodded tersely before backing away to take the dogs out.

-

“So, anything?” Will asked as he took another hungry bite of the prosciutto, mushroom, and spinach frittata.

It was obvious that Will liked the dish and Hannibal was pleased.

“Unfortunately, a dreamless sleep it would seem. Nothing unwanted crawling in the night.” Hannibal paused, Will looked uncomfortable when he said that, clearly the night wasn’t as dreamless as it was for him; sleepless more like. “Was it the same for you?” He asked.

Without pausing in his ravenous consumption of the frittata, Will glared at Hannibal as he chewed, swallowing before saying, “Obviously not. One of my daily activities can be considered, ‘night terrors’.”

“A professional then.”

At that, Will’s grumpy frown turned slightly upwards. Slightly. But that was enough for Hannibal to feel very pleased with himself.

“What are you going to do today?” Will asked as he took a sip of his coffee, his plate now cleared.

“Go to the office, locate my appointment book, and inform all my patients of my current condition.” Hannibal said placidly.

“It’s in your desk in the bottom drawer,” Will said without thinking.

Hannibal gave him a curious look. Like the fact that Will knows such intimate details of his life is proof of their more than ‘doctor-patient’ relationship.

“Don’t read into that,” Will stuttered quickly, “What are you going to tell them? Your patients?”

“The truth. That I suffered a head trauma and as a result am temporarily amnesiatic.”

-

“Yes, of course, I’ll inform you of when I’m ready to start seeing patients again. Though, I must remind you, that the pause may be indefinite.”

Sighing quietly despite being alone, Hannibal put his phone down and looked at his appointment book. He had finally finished calling all his patients and informing them of his current condition. It took a lot longer than he had anticipated, but he had underestimated the neediness of his clients, realizing that most are still desperate for an outlet even if said outlet having no context and no concern. People are just waiting for their turn to speak, doesn’t matter who, just to anyone who will listen. Hannibal managed to keep most conversations to 15 minutes or less but there had been one particularly trying patient that seemed keen to reminisce about their past interactions, specially about cheese, though Hannibal was certain that if anyone was to spark his memory, it would not be that man, and definitely not by tyromancy.

It was nearly 11am, and after sorting out his obligations, Hannibal’s mind inevitably wandered to thoughts of Will Graham. There was a past there, something between them, intimate but not sexual. At least, not yet, Hannibal hoped.

However, even after an exhaustive search, not much was yielded. In fact, the only thing the search resulted in was a curious absence. As if certain incriminating items have been destroyed or burned as the ashes suggest.

So how was Hannibal going to get closer to Will without talking about their past?

With good ol’ seduction, Hannibal thought with a smirk to himself.

Step 1: knocking down Will’s forts.

Taking out his cellphone, Hannibal messaged Jack Crawford, who had checked in on him earlier anyways:

Agent Crawford, I am settling well. Though without patients, I find myself at a loss as to what to do. Perhaps you can do me a favor and allow me to bring lunch for you and Will. What time are your lunch breaks?

-

As expected, it was an invitation that was impossible for Jack to refuse. Even though Hannibal found literally no information on his past, somehow he figured out that Jack Crawford's weakness was Hannibal's cooking.

Predictably, Jack did not inform Will that Hannibal was bringing (bribing them with) lunch.

Heading straight for Will's classroom, students filing out while some still lingered, looking longingly at their unapproachable, grumpy but cute, genius, unstable professor.

"What are you doing here?" Will all but snarled when the students all had finally left.

"Jack did not tell you I was stopping by for lunch?"

At that, Will deflated, Jack loves to catch him off guard, and shook his head.

Will continued to sort out his podium for his lunch break, he accidentally touched the space bar on his laptop, causing the projection to shift from his written assignment to the next slide; a man entwined with a tree, poisonous flowers blooming from within.

For a moment, Hannibal stood almost awestruck at the image, a strange surge of understanding and familiarity.

"Like what you see?" Will asked, the main source of light being the projection behind him; hooding his face, creating a rather malevolent outline.

"It is certainly…" Hannibal deflected, "eye catching," finishing his sentence with a lusty stare at Will.

Uncomfortable, Will snapped the top of the laptop closed, sending them into darkness, "The Ripper thinks it's art."

"The Ripper?" Hannibal asked.

The professor narrowed his eyes, trying to see if Hannibal is lying, if some sudden flash of memory graced him upon gazing at his prior works.

No dice.

A flood of light entered from the hallways as the double doors of the lecture hall opened.

“Ah! Doctor Lecter, I see you’ve found Will’s lecture hall. Was that from memory or did you ask someone?” Jack boomed as he entered the room, projecting his voice so that it could be heard from every corner.

Jack had a folder under his arm.

“Unfortunately,” Hannibal said in his same muted tone and register, not one to shout, no needing to shout to project his presence, “a trainee pointed me in the right direction.” Not before allowing said trainee to believe that Hannibal and Will were live-in lovers.

-

“Can you please point me in the direction of Professor Graham’s office? I forgot to give him his lunch this morning.” Hannibal added with a lovelorn look and gesturing to his soft sided cooler.

“Oh! This morning? Professor Graham?”

Hannibal watched as the face fell at the missed opportunity and then delighted, under the impression that Hannibal was Will’s live-in lover.

“His lecture hall is this way,” the trainee said, leading Hannibal towards the door, an obvious guise to prolong the interaction.

“Are you his student?” Hannibal asked.

“I’m hoping to, his classes are notoriously difficult to get in. Especially due to his … uh, sabbatical last semester.”

“I’ll try to put in a good word.”

The trainee peeked a look at Hannibal and flushed, “So, um, how do you know Professor Graham?”

With a toothy smile, Hannibal replied with darkened eyes, “He’s my emergency contact.”

Leaving the trainee to spread the information that their elusive Professor Graham already has a man waiting at home

Chapter 4

“To start, is a buttermilk ricotta with freshly baked bread. Then, a cavatelli alla Norcina with pork sausage, black truffles and grana padano. And blue corn ricotta fritters with huckleberry jam to finish.”

“This looks delicious Doctor,” Jack praised effusively, momentarily forgetting the folder he had brought with him as he sat down to appraise the meal.

But Will didn’t, and nodded towards the folder, “Is that from the river?”

The three men were seated around Will’s desk in the lecture hall, each with a neat 3 tiered bento box, all identically save for Will’s dessert that was garnished with strawberries cut in the shape of valentines. (Hannibal likes giving Will hearts.)

Jack seemed to struggle a bit as to whether or not he wanted to talk shop during lunch or wait until they had finished eating. In the end, Jack’s workaholic nature won out and he handed the folder over to Will, “Got a new one this morning, Roland Umber. Inside are also photographs of the 6 victims found in the dam plus the DMV photos of people that recently went missing around the same time and area.” He glanced at Hannibal uncertainly, unsure how to address his amnesia “Uh, should we be discussing this in front of him? Are there certain things we can or can’t mention?”

Will shrugged, already having opened the folder, “Talk about the past, don’t talk about the past. It doesn’t seem to matter anyways. The majority of the theories on memory recovery for amnesiacs are mainly based upon storylines from All My Children or General Hospital, which, as you can imagine, are *real* scientific.”

“Please don’t hold back on my account, I assure you, it won’t offend my sensibilities.” Hannibal added.

Will gave Jack a look that said, *‘See what I said?’* And continued to flip through the stack of photos. One hand turning the images over while the other held a fork.

If Hannibal was displeased with Will’s divided attention, he did not show it. The Quantico Professor thumbed through the images so quickly it seemed he was merely counting the pages rather than analyzing them. It was so anticlimactic that Jack had already shifted his full attention back to his meal, digging in graciously as he complimented the chef.

And then it clicked. At the end of the pile of photographs of the victims, Will placed the last photo down, paused, and then put his fork down, slowly.

Hannibal, having never left Will’s attention, was on the brink of anticipation, curious, and on the edge of his seat.

At the end of the pile, Will took a deep breath and closed his eyes to let the pendulum swing. He used to be sensitive about others watching him when he did his ‘thing’ but after having

absolutely zero privacy in prison, Will's 'sensitivity' level greatly decreased.

FWOOM. FWOOM. FWOOM.

And it clicked. Will began to rearrange the photographs, into a bit of a collage with overlapping corners. The other two men watched as the younger man moved the images around, like pieces of a jigsaw, slotting each picture into its appropriate place. Jack didn't see it immediately; and it wasn't until the third to last photograph was set that Jack figured out what all the victims had in common.

"It's a color palette." Will stated plainly once he was finished.

Hannibal stared at Will in rapturous awe, amazed in that subtle way of his. It was obvious to Will now what Hannibal really felt. He used to think that Hannibal was hidden behind a person suit, masking his emotions, but now he realized that Hannibal had always been there, just, oh so *subtly* . One had to look *very* closely to see his real feelings. But once you've cracked the code, it was so clear. The slight widening of the eyes, the imperceptible part of his lips, and that dull sparkle in his eyes. Hannibal was shook.

How had Will not seen it before? The way that Hannibal looked at him, especially when on the subject of killing; that wonderstruck gaze. It was the same look Hannibal had always given him, but Will hadn't notice it before. His damn recalcitrance at eye contact blinded (literally) himself from the devil before him. Now, and to follow that (loose) metaphor, the 'devil' has become an 'empty vessel'.

"I can't tell if that's racist or not, but skin color is definitely involved in the most basest of ways." Beverly Katz said behind Will, impressed, one eyebrow raised and on the verge of a smirk.

The professor flinched, he had not noticed Beverly entering the lecture hall during his little pendulum swing. He really got to get better at not letting people sneak up behind him like that!

"Hey Hannibal, remember anything yet?" Beverly asked conversationally, changing gears. Wearing her trademark leather jacket, black jeans, and boots combo, rather contrary to the usual lab rat outfit, Beverly stood with hands on her hips, leaning to one side.

"Alas, Miss Katz," Hannibal said oozing with charm, "my memories are still limited to the past few days, but I can't say that I am disappointed in the new ones I am making."

"Why he chooses them doesn't matter," Jack cut in, determined to get the conversation back on the path he wants.

Beverly and Will looked at each other in resignation, Jack wants these killers so bad that he doesn't even care about the implications of the murder itself.

"What matters is," Jack continued, unaware of the glances around him, "how he is choosing these victims. Where is he getting them from? And when is the next one?"

Will hesitated. “I don’t know if we’ll find any more bodies like that Jack.”

“What do you mean?”

“You said that all the victims found were coated with a kind of resin right? Injected with a preservative?”

Jack nodded.

“These,” Will gestured to the photographs of the victims, “are all the mistakes, the imperfections, the discard pile. And, as you can see,” he adds with a grim shake of the head, “already run the gamut. Not many colors left.”

“So how do we catch this guy? How do we find him?” Jack pressed.

“Well, he’s not a racist. If anything, he’s a highly religious man, or, at least, one that wants to believe. He’s appreciative of all of God’s creatures, all colors and shapes. The breadth of His work. That he can do it too and he wants Him to know.”

“Ok, and where is this guy?”

“It’s hard to say Jack,” Will sighed.

“What do you mean? What does he do? Does he have a record? How old is he? What’s his profile Will?” Jack asked with increasing intensity.

Totally fed up with male macho bullshit while in prison, Will said tersely, “I’m only as good as what I’ve got to work with. And all I got are photos.”

At that Beverly perked up, “Oh! We got bodies!” She piped up brightly, grinning.

With a slow condescending raise of the eyebrows, Jack said, “We got bodies.” And looked at Will with a triumphant smile.

The younger man fought the urge to roll his eyes.

-

Jesus, Will thought to himself, these serial killers, they sure are a devoted lot. Whenever they get an idea in their head, they really try their best to see it through. Including the one standing next to him. Currently, they were standing in the morgue looking at 7 bodies; 4 female, 3 male, varying in height and skin tone, coated with a cracking clear coat making them appear like sugar coated candies. Will shook his head, he’s got to stop hanging out with cannibals.

The dedication to pursuing a work such as this (The Muralist, he had started calling him in his head), is not easy and not without some strong-ass conviction. That he had gotten it in his head, so strong was that belief that he had chosen to commit the ultimate crime, to take the life of a fellow man. And, organizing those thoughts into a tangible plan of action and actually successfully following through. Well, almost.

The *real* FBI agents, Beverly and Jack, had to step away from the morgue for a moment. Alone with Will, Hannibal peered emotionlessly at the most recent body of Roland Umber. He lowered his face a couple of inches away from the body and inhaled deeply.

Will narrowed his eyes, it was weird but Hannibal sniffing things was nothing new to him.

But Hannibal said nothing except an intrigued look when he straightened back up.

Much to his chagrin, Will needed to know what Hannibal smelled, “What is it?”

“I wonder,” Hannibal began teasingly, “what you would be willing to do if I were to tell you.”

For that, the doctor received a murderous glare.

Hannibal calculated. “Corn fields,” he said casually, he didn’t want what Will wouldn’t give freely anyways. For that he was rewarded with an unexpected smile from the younger man.

“This killer needs someplace private to do what he does. Somewhere upstream from where the body was found, close to water and corn.” Will muttered once he gathered his fort back up, “Most likely in a silo. It’d have the capacity to store his ‘mural’ with direct access to the sky above.”

“Is the killer looking at God?” Hannibal mused, wonderingly, “A challenge of equals?”

“‘I can be as terrible as you. I can take and I can create,’” Will answered for him.

Chapter 5

“I got to be Doctor Hannibal Lecter today, the psychiatrist that accompanied special agent Will Graham to crime scenes. I stood in my former shoes and looked through his eyes.” Hannibal said wonderingly, reflecting deeply upon the experience, “But, I was unable to slip into his mind, regain those lost memories.”

“An FBI crime scene is not a pleasant sight, not many people have the stomach,” Bedelia paused, letting the emphasis on the word stomach linger, “for that kind of thing.”

“My former life as an emergency room surgeon must have prepared me for that.”

“What did you think of the crime scene?”

“Nietzschean, pessimistic, monstrous in size, a penultimate design.”

“Suggestions for improvement?”

“If he had placed himself in the center, reflecting back, would’ve been more poignant.”

The ‘ *that’s what I would’ve done’* was left unsaid but everyone heard it.

“You think you could’ve done better?” Will sneered from the far corner of the room. Hannibal had suggested that Will join the therapy session considering that he was currently bereft of one. Curious to see what Hannibal in therapy was like and what kind of therapist was Dr. du Marier, Will agreed.

“To each his own design, wouldn’t you say?” Hannibal said so agreeably that he could charm the pants off a nun.

Or convince a man into his own murder tableaux.

But he didn't do that.

"Would you like to discuss your past history with Hannibal?" Bedelia asked.

Will glared at Bedelia disdainfully, "Why?"

Bedelia looks at Will and raises a brow as if to say, ' *Why do you think?'* Instead, she turns to Hannibal, "What have you been able to collect of your past?"

"From what I gathered from conversations and search engine results, I was able to determine that on April 4th of last year, I met Will Graham. Born in Arkansas, graduated from LSU, was a homicide detective for the New Orleans Police Department for nearly 8 years before being recruited as a Quantico professor. Recently consulting with the BAU on several cases including the Minnesota Shrike case - which was the first case we worked together, and the Chesapeake Ripper. Poor paperwork, circumstantial evidence, and a brain fever led to his wrongful imprisonment. However, not one to let another take credit for his work, this ' *Chesapeake Ripper* '", Hannibal said with a bit of a jealous sneer, "exonerated Will."

"That's rather vague." Bedelia commented.

"It appeared that many of the articles were redacted once it was revealed that it was a false accusation. Information was limited."

"You googled me." Will said, unsure how to feel about that.

"Yes." Hannibal said as if it were obvious. And it was.

"Why do you think Will harbors such…" Bedelia paused as if thinking deeply about her word choice and emphasized the next word in that psychiatric ploy of hers, " *hostility* towards

you?”

Word choice carries connotations.

“Hostility is a strong emotion, not dissimilar to passion.” Hannibal said, always the glass half full kind of guy.

Will scoffs.

“The majority of my sessions with Hannibal, memories with or without, have all revolved around you, Mr. Graham. His unrelenting obsession with you has never faltered; is that not the very definition *passionate* ?”

Without stopping to let Will take in this revelation, Bedelia continued, “Tell Mr. Graham, what did you feel in regards to Hannibal accompanying you to the crime scene today? Was his presence a detriment or a benefit? Would you like for him to accompany you again?”

For several long seconds, Will did not move, immobile like a statue, before finally, as if one could hear the creaks in his unused neck, he nodded, “It wasn’t a detriment.” He admitted quietly.

Inwardly, Hannibal beamed, telling Will about the cornfield was the right decision after all.

-

Hannibal knew that Will wanted to leave, that he didn’t want to stay at Hannibal’s house, and that he borderline despised the doctor. But on the other side of the line, Will enjoyed their banter, being able to convey everything with just an expression, and was greatly intrigued by the doctor.

With each passing day, Hannibal could see a lowering of Will's defenses, lowering of the forts. And Hannibal was determined to have Will by his side.

After all, they are a devoted lot.

Especially after spending nearly the entire day with Will. From accompanying him to The Muralist's crime scene - James Gray had already been arrested by the local SWAT team, there was only 1 cornfield within a 50 mile radius of the stream so it was pretty easy to figure out the location - to their session with Dr. du Marier, it had been quite intriguing. He had seen Will **perform;** empathizing so closely with the killer that he was completely lost in that world, disconnected from his own reality, and that rush back. It was awe inspiring, Hannibal had never seen anything like it before or at least have no knowledge of even a condition or possibility of something like Will Graham's empathy was possible. That he was looking at someone incredibly unique. Just like him. And the therapy session, who also showed how incredibly troubled Will Graham is. It was no surprise that the young man was haunted by what he sees with his empathy, what he feels. Hannibal wanted to both soothe and revel in Will's inner anguish.

With the jangling sound of metal clinking together announcing Will's presence and intent to walk the dogs, Hannibal turned to see Will in the doorway of the study.

"I'm going to walk the dogs," Will said.

"May I join you?" Hannibal asked, realizing he wanted to learn **everything** about Will Graham. What he likes, what he doesn't like, his favorite subject in school, what his father was like, what his mother was like, and why so many dogs?

Blinking a bit in surprise, Will raised an eyebrow and asked, "Dressed like that?" And nodded towards Hannibal's three piece grey plaid suit and Italian loafers.

"The Muralist didn't seem to mind."

Good point, Will thought to himself, Hannibal did wear that to the crime scene in the middle of a cornfield. The man should've looked like a fish out of water dressed in that perfectly

tailored suit and expensive shoes while the rest of the FBI and local law enforcement ran around in boots and tactical gear, but instead he looked like a majestic white Buffalo, standing out because he was better than them.

Will snorted and grinned, “Okay.”

-

“Tell me about how you got Winston and why you decided to name him as such,” Hannibal said as they started to walk together.

Hannibal held only 1 leash to which the end of was Winston, the most behaved dog out of Will’s pack. The other 6 leashes were clutched in Will’s hands. As were the doggie bags.

Looking questioningly at Hannibal, Will replied slowly, “Winston Smith from 1984.”

“Because he was able to discern his own truth, aside from what Big Brother told him?”

“Because he survived.”

“You saved him.”

“Maybe, or they saved me...” Will thought to himself, he deflected, “I found Winston wandering alone in the dark on my way home from a crime scene.”

“Do you find yourself wandering alone in the dark on the way home from crime scenes Will?” Hannibal asked curiously, he hadn’t failed to notice Will’s dissociated state on the drive back from Gray’s macabre mural.

Will grimaced as if that statement had physically hurt, but with a grim smile he replied, “I’m alone in that darkness.”

I can’t be saved.

“No, you’re not alone. I’m standing right beside you in that darkness.” Hannibal said seriously, Will doesn’t need a savior, he doesn’t need saving, he needs a **companion.**

Will graced Hannibal with a wary look but didn’t reject his comment.

A win in Hannibal's eyes.

“How did the rest of your pack come into your life?” Hannibal continued, moving on to more palatable conversations.

At that Will’s face lit up like all pet parents do when talking about their beloved fur babies, “Oh, the oldest one is Buster,” upon hearing his name, Buster stopped his snuffling in the bushes to look happily with his tongue lolling on his huge bottom teeth at Will, “that little white one with the underbite, he actually came to me first.” Will smiled when Buster wagged his tail, “He came up to me at a parking lot and jumped in my car!”

“Love at first sight.” Hannibal commented; looking directly at the younger man’s profile as he animatedly pointed out the rest of his dogs.

Will chuckled lightly, “Then I found Ellie, that little curly haired white dog, under my porch. I have no idea how she got there but thought she was brown when I first found her! She was so dirty!”

As Will continued to tell the backstories on all his dogs, unsurprisingly he did get some from the local animal shelter, it would’ve been a full time job looking for strays on the side of the road, Hannibal wondered how he could get Will to refer to him with such fond affection. He also wondered how he could get Will to refer to him like that; like he was part of Will’s family of strays.

Chapter 6

“Freddie Lounds is dead,” Jack announced as he walked into the morgue.

“Ding dong,” Will said tonelessly, not moving his gaze from the dead body before him and accepted the file that Jack handed to him without looking up.

“Will!” Alana remonstrated. “I know she wasn’t your biggest fan but she was just doing her job.”

“Oh c'mon Alana, the woman crucified Will and basically put him on blast saying he was The Chesapeake Ripper!” Beverly said, “Which may or may not have clouded the judgment of several law enforcement personnel.” “Sorry about that, Will,” she added.

Will nodded in acknowledged forgiveness.

“Still,” Brian argued, “She was just trying to get the truth.”

Will snorted, “Yeah, tabloids are known for their accuracy.” As he took a photo out of the file folder.

As Brian was about to open his mouth for another retort, Jack stopped them, “Is it the Ripper?” He asked.

Everyone clapped their mouths shut, they knew there was no joking around when Jack started on the Chesapeake Ripper. The man saw only red when the Ripper was involved. The Ripper’s, the victims, or his own, Will wasn’t sure.

“Any organs missing?” Will asked the obvious.

“Autopsy isn’t done yet. Body was found this morning in a wheat field two states away. Burnt to a crisp. Passerbys had assumed it was a scarecrow.” Jack handed Will a folder full of pictures. “Is it the Ripper?” He asked again.

Will took a deep breath, but hesitated, it wasn’t that he needed privacy but he also didn’t exactly want an audience either. In any case, Jack got the hint, “Everyone out!”

By the time Will was done with his pendulum swing of horrors, he was sweating and breathing hard, it wasn’t because of the horror he witnessed, but rather the beauty. The Chesapeake Ripper was totally, completely, and without a doubt, in love with him. Fuck.

Okay, maybe he was a little bit scared that the most feared serial killer is infatuated with him.

“It’s him,” Will confirmed once everyone re-entered the morgue.

“Are you sure?” Jack pressed.

Seriously, what was even the point of using his ‘special talents’ if it’s only going to be questioned each time he uses it? But Will didn’t say that. Instead, “Where did you say her body was found again?”

“Clinton, South Carolina.”

The South. She was found in the South. That must mean something. But more importantly, so was Hannibal. Well, he was heading north at least anyway. Which means, Freddie Lounds was what he was on the way home from - hence the lack of personal identification.

“When was the last time anyone last saw her?” Will asked.

Jack's face fell, "The timeline isn't clear due to the nature of her job-"

"Bet all that sneaking around didn't help," Bev whispered to Will.

Alana shot Beverly a displeased look and Jack ignored her, used to Team Sassy Science side remarks, and continued, "but it appears that she had deleted all the material from her website three days ago. The only article left is the article about Abel Gideon."

The burnt remains of Freddie Lounds included two additional pairs of arms, her three arms outstretched palms upwards in exhalation, to be worshiped.

"Will!" Jack said again loudly. His pet profiler keeps getting lost.

Will blinked, snapping back to himself, "Yeah?"

"What do you see?"

"He's transformed her into Durga, the Hindu goddess of protection and strength." Will says, though he doesn't mention that in Sanskrit Durga also means, 'fort'.

"So he's saying that she's a protective mother?" Jack interprets incorrectly.

"She is fierce when it comes to her work," Price said.

"He's the protector and warrior. Fighting to protect that which he -" loves. Will stutters, "which he cares for," he substitutes. "He's- he's protecting his work, his legacy. He's letting everyone know that TattleCrime is full of lies, that's why he deleted it all except the article about Abel Gideon."

The article you made her wrote. Was left unsaid, but if Jack couldn't see that was left to bait him as Miriam Lass' arm was, then Jack was an even worse agent than he thought. Though for what purpose, it was unclear as Hannibal went missing shortly after that discovery at the observatory.

"He also deleted the article about you." Jack said lowly.

Oh, we're going there now? Will thought, fine. "He didn't delete the one written by you." He jabbed right back.

"So this is a message to me now?"

"It's not the first." Will said.

A distant bell chimed. After all, Quantico was still a school first and foremost.

Will looked at the clock, it was noon, "I'm going to lunch and prepare for my next lecture," he reminded them in case they'd forgotten his actual full-time job.

"You're leaving?" Jack asked incredulously, as if Will had grown an extra head.

"Without an autopsy and a body, there's only so much I can do, Jack." Not that there was much he can do even with an autopsy and a body since there wouldn't be any evidence . Oh, that pesky proof.

"But lives -"

"At stake. Yeah. I know. I know." Will waved Jack off, "Let me know when the autopsy is done and the body is here and I'll come take a look." He dismissed so casually and calmly that Jack actually nodded and agreed. What a huge departure he must've been from his

former trembly, sweaty, angry self that he had stunned his boss into relenting. A near impossible feat when it comes to Jack Crawford and The Ripper.

“Ooo, where you going? Can I come? I’m hungry too.” Beverly asked, eyes lighting up mischievously.

“Oh, I- um, Hannibal’s bringing me something.” Will stuttered.

“Oh ho ho! Does Doctor Lecter bring you lunch everyday?”

Will huffed in slight offense, “No, he usually makes me lunchbox.” As if that was somehow more appropriate.

“He … usually makes you … a … lunchbox…” Alana said slowly with a stormy look.

Flustered and feeling bad for Alana, Will tried to reason, “But he said he wanted to bring me a hot meal today.” He spluttered as an excuse.

“A hot meal…” Alana continued in the same icy tone.

Everyone in the room noticed that that particular day was an unseasonably cold and rainy one. Except for Will, he never minded the rain.

-

It was roasted duck Thai curry with Jasmine Rice and a heart shaped mango sticky rice for dessert this time. Delicious, as always, and Will said such.

While they are eating, Will mentions his most recent case, moreso because he wanted to vent about the relentless and unscrupulous reporter than discuss the case itself. Afterall, Will knew who killed her. The who, what, and when, too. But Hannibal kept asking questions about The Chesapeake Ripper. Asking about his modus operandi, his past victims, his motive; almost as if he wanted to hunt the Ripper himself.

Guess one can't always recognize what's in the mirror.

Of course, Will dismisses all of Hannibal's concerns. Afterall, why wouldn't he? He knew exactly where The Chesapeake Ripper was.

"Will, it's clear that this Ripper is obsessed with you, I'm worried about you going out alone. If you would allow it, I would like to accompany you to your home to retrieve your belongings."

Will wanted to laugh, oh how he wanted to laugh at the irony of it all, Hannibal being jealous of himself. But, instead, "He's not going to hurt me. I know what he's capable of, currently."

"As do I Will. I've seen the case files. The man is an intelligent sadist that will stop at nothing to get what he wants. Your trial, the judge, Ms. Lounds; he wants you Will."

"So you want to protect me from The Chesapeake Ripper?" Will teased with a knowing grin. Oh this was way too funny. It was nice to be the one who knew everything for once.

Hannibal looked fondly exasperated, "Will, as much as I love to see you smile, this is no laughing matter. I'm serious. This man has killed well over a dozen people and wants to kill you too."

At this, Will finally did laugh, "Sorry," he wheezed, shaking his head, "he doesn't want to kill me."

"Then what does he want?"

“Oh, I think you know.”

Hannibal had a startled look in his eyes that quickly turned into a roiling inferno.

-

In the end, Will does allow Hannibal to join him on his journey back to his house in Wolf Trap. If not nothing else to end the pointless argument. He even allowed Hannibal to pick him up from work to escort him to Wolf Trap, as if the Chesapeake Ripper was watching his every move.

Oh wait, he was..

The hope to only remain at Hannibal’s home for three days was short-lived as Will realized early on that the other man was determined for prolonged stay. Especially now, with the ‘ threat’ of The Chesapeake Ripper, Hannibal was even more reluctant to let Will out of his sight. Gathering a few more articles of clothing (of course, Hannibal had mysteriously managed to supply the guest bedroom closet with clothes that fit Will perfectly), his mail that were mostly bills (Perhaps it would be prudent to get your mail forwarded to Baltimore for the time being, Will) , some work papers, and a few dog treats.

Putting the last of the items into the Bentley’s trunk, Will suddenly realized, “Oh crap, I need to go pick up Harley’s medicine at the vet.”

“The brown one with the white chest?” Hannibal asked.

Will smiled broadly, “Very good!” He praised Hannibal like one of his dogs when they figured out a new trick. “Yeah, she’s got a bit of arthritis, getting on in the years.”

The doctor seemed to react similarly too. As if he perked up, Hannibal stood a little straighter and angled his chin proudly.

-x-x-

"Oh hey Will! Here to pick up Harley's meds?" The young vet tech asked. She had brown hair tied in a loose bun, scrubs with prancing black ponies, and minimal to no makeup. The kind of attire where you work with animals all day.

Will nods.

"Who's that with you?"

"Oh, this is Hannibal. He's a psychiatrist." Will says casually while he waited for the vet tech to look up Harley's file in the computer.

"Mr. Fancy Pants from work?"

"Mister Fancy Pants," Hannibal repeated with a bemused smile directed at Will; who flushed.

The gregarious vet tech laughed, "Yeah," she said as she simultaneously typed on the computer, multitasking skillfully, "One time Will came in all gussied up in this blue suit - that totally matched his eyes by the way - and said that he was on his way to a colleague's for dinner and that he was very formal. One sec, let me get the meds." And turned to go into the back room behind the window.

Staring steadfastly at the vet tech's empty office chair, Will could feel the smug look Hannibal was no doubt giving him after the vet tech revealed that Will had essentially dressed up for him. It was after he got out of the BSHCI and was just about setting his plan of entrapment into motion. Hannibal had always been a man of aesthetics, and Will wanted to appeal to that sense. Thinking that if he had presented himself in a more polished manner that

Hannibal would fall into a false sense of security believing that Will wanted to be like him. Not realizing that he had been inadvertently seducing the man.

“Here you go Will,” the bubbly vet tech said as she handed the package of pills to Will. “Oh, we stopped carrying that brand of flea treatment, but we can ship it to you, free of charge.”

“Yeah, ok.”

“To the Wolf Trap address on file?”

“Ye-uh, no. Actually, can you ship it to Baltimore instead?”

“Of course, what’s the address?”

“My address is,” Hannibal smoothly cut in, “217 N Charles St. Baltimore, Maryland. 21201.”

“Do you have any pets Mister...?” The vet tech asked brightly. She really loved animals.

“Doctor Lecter, but please call me Hannibal. And, no, only Will’s at the moment.”

“His seven dogs ALL moved in?”

“Jack, Harley, Ellie, Buster, Max, Zoe, and Winston.”

“Wow,” the brunette woman said, “Smart, handsome, rich, and willing to put up with seven dogs? Dude, Will,” she said looking at the Quantico professor, “He’s a keeper.”

Will groaned and scrubbed a hand over his face.

“I must patronize this establishment more often,” Hannibal said, smiling broadly.

Chapter 7

It was rather bothersome that Will didn't seem to be taking this ' Chesapeake Ripper' seriously, Hannibal thought to himself with a petulant frown. The man was obviously infatuated with Will (couldn't let him go to prison nor be insulted) and a highly intelligent serial killer that, despite all the manpower the FBI could muster and years of investigation, leaves no trace of evidence and not one inch closer to being caught.

Admittedly, his 'designs', as Will calls them, are rather beautiful. Hannibal had managed to get photos of the Ripper's work by bribing members of the forensics team with dinner. Ms. Katz was all too eager to take the bait. He didn't find it strange that he understood immediately the meaning behind each of the Ripper kills (seeing as he's a world class psychiatrist), instead Hannibal worried about the message each display was meant to convey. It didn't sit well with Hannibal that several "designs" had been meant for Will.

If only there was some way he could extricate Will from all of this. It'd be impossible to convince him to stop profiling for the FBI, the young man's obsession with catching killers would not be swayed, that much was evident. Much less the thought that Jack Crawford would actually allow Will to leave; Will's own obsession with the Chesapeake Ripper almost paling in comparison to the head of the BAU's.

Problem was, Will was very … upset with him. Despite all his attempts, he cannot seem to fathom what it could be, but he knows that Will feels terribly betrayed by him. Hannibal had to figure out a way for them to spend more time together. Maybe work together in some way.

Hannibal pondered the possibilities as he mused the bourbon section, debating which bottle to get. When asked earlier if Will would like anything from the market the man had casually replied, "Can you get a bottle of whiskey? Maker's," he added belatedly after realizing Hannibal would buy the most expensive bottle, "Missin' a bit of dat Kentucky bourbon," Will felt he needed to explain, not noticing the bit of Southern drawl that escaped his lips when he did so.

Smiling fondly upon reflection of that memory, Hannibal let out an indulgent sigh and grabbed the bottle of Maker's Mark off the medium level shelf.

“Kentucky bourbon? That’s not nearly rarified enough for the likes of you. You must’ve really hit your head hard.” A voice derided, one that had been scorned.

Given the context, Hannibal felt himself in an altruistic mood, and, of course, he would never debase himself to such low level as jeers, so he turned and said magnanimously, “Hello Alana,” but also where it would hurt, “I find myself motivated in trying new things where Will is concerned.” Placing the bottle in his shopping basket.

They were currently at an upscale liquor store that also sold imported cheeses and meats. In spite of his protests, Will had actually become rather fond of the charcuterie plates Hannibal started preparing to accompany their cocktail hours.

“Sounds like you’re lowering your standards,” Alana sniped.

“I disagree. Standards are not directly equated with its value. Rather standards are based upon the rubric its creator. If I were to make an American South based bourbon cocktail, the bold vanilla in Maker’s Mark would be much more suitable than the subtle complexities of a Pappy Van Winkle best enjoyed neat or with a whiskey stone. The value perceived, is in that of the intender.” He ended with a flourish as if he had been holding court.

“And Will is your intended?” Alana curled her lip as she spat. “He hates you, you know.”

“We’re going to couples therapy.”

“He doesn’t like the opera.”

“Not many people do.”

“He has seven dogs.”

“We take them on walks together.”

“He’s unstable.”

“Who wants normal anyway?”

Like two sharks, they circled each other under the guise of polite conversation while taking verbal jabs, both looking for a sign of weakness.

Then, another voice interrupts their tense conversation, “ohmygod. Hey - I mean: Hello Doctor Lecter!”

A finely dressed rotund man in a plaid three piece suit appeared in the bourbon aisle beside them. His eager eyes and basketful of cheese already allowed Hannibal to infer who the man was.

“Oh, right, I’m Franklin. One of Doctor Lecter’s patients,” he introduced himself to the both of them.

“Hello Franklin.” Hanniabl said out of courtesy.

“Nice to meet you Franklin.” Alana said kindly, for all her anger towards Hannibal, she couldn’t bring herself to be unkind to a stranger, even if it’s one of Hannibal’s fans.

“I’m so glad to see you’re doing so well Doctor Lecter! I was so worried about you. I wanted to bring you some soup or cheese or wine but I didn’t know where you lived. But it looks like I didn’t need to! Ha ha!” Franklin laughed heartily to no one in particular.

Alana smiled uneasily. It was painful watching the man skewer himself.

“Lucky lady you got there,” implying that Alana had been the one taking care of Hannibal, “Are you Hannibal’s girlfriend?” Franklin dared to ask, slightly jealous but of course Doctor Lecter would have a beautiful, caring, successful girlfriend, he’d expect nothing less.

That was the wrong question to ask as Alana saw only red. “No,” she hissed, “Dark curly haired, scruffy men are more his type.” Glaring directly at Hannibal, “Excuse me,” she said as she brusquely pushed past them and out of the aisle.

Leaving Hannibal with, he took a deep breath and closed his eyes - readying himself for: a wide-eyed, besotted, love struck, hopeful, and desperate Franklin. He grimaced.

Alana may have won this round.

-

After a rather hasty retreat and an even hastier explanation that, no, Alana was not referring to him, and, no, she was only joking, and no, Hannibal was not playing coy and that doctor-patient rules still exist with or without memory. And, no, he really, really is not sexually attracted to him.

Not that any of those words had any of the intended effect as Franklin continued to look at Hannibal with lovelorn eyes. It was a testament to Hannibal’s self control that the only indication of his disgust was a small tremor in his left eye as he pried Franklin off of him.

-

Feeling slightly discomfited and harried by the whole experience with Franklin, Hannibal hurried home, putting as much distance as he could between them. Walking into the house with his hands full of groceries, carrying no less than 3 bags in each hand, Hannibal passed by the atrium and was momentarily struck breathless.

Reclining on the recessed window seat, one leg bent, the other dangling off the edge, petting Buster idly in his lap, Winston sharing the seat on the other end and the rest of the dogs curled up below, Will Graham was illuminated by the morning light and framed by the potted plants in the atrium, it was a vision Hannibal would remember forever. The man's face was smooth as he rested with his eyes closed, sunbathing, mouth slightly upturned as if he were worry free.

Mon dieu . He really was in love.

Hannibal almost didn't want to breathe, so much so that he didn't want to unsettle this moment. This freeze frame of beauty. But that is not how life works. And when he moved to get a little closer, he had forgotten the grocery bags in his hands and the shifting of its contents alerted the dogs who then alerted Will with their wagging tails. Harley and Max coming up to Hannibal to sniff the grocery bags. Noticing that Will was now watching him with an expectant look, eyebrows raised in question, Hannibal said:

"If I saw you everyday, forever, Will, I would remember this time."

Chapter 8

“He just keeps looking at me with that love struck look on his face! It makes it very difficult to…” Will paused, “organize my ‘plans’.”

(I.e. Reckoning)

“Does that make you uncomfortable?” A disinterested voice asked. Bedelia spoke as if she were reading the questions verbatim out of a Psychiatry 101 textbook.

“No, it doesn’t make me uncomfortable.” Will huffed, “It makes me feel… I don’t know, flattered? Vindicated? I don’t know.”

“You’re not repulsed by his attentions?”

“Repulsed?” Will furrowed his brows, thinking, “No, not repulsed.”

“You don’t seem bothered by the fact that Hannibal’s a man.”

Will blinked, momentarily confused, the idea of gay panic hadn’t even crossed his mind. He was too busy going through cannibal panic. The fact that the person infatuated with him happened to be of the same sex was the least of his consideration. “You mean, aside from all else, am I scared of his homosexual desires for me?”

Bedelia said nothing and waited. That was what she was asking, Will merely rephrased it.

Should it bother him that he didn’t even consider the homosexual implications of Hannibal’s pursuit?

“I’m not sexually attracted to men. And I’m comfortable enough with my sexuality that I am not irrationally violent if a man hits on me.” Although, actually, he might be with Hannibal, but that was because Hannibal framed him, let his brain melt, and alienated all his friends, and NOT because of his gay desires. “I’m hostile towards Hannibal for other reasons.”

Will glared at his interim psychiatrist, as if to say, You know, you were there. As usual, she looked indifferent, giving off this skeptical aura that made Will question his own words.

“I’m aware. You said you felt flattered,” Bedelia replied.

“Well, yeah, I mean, objectively, it is. Flattering. Not including his extra-curricular activities. On the outside, he appears to be the perfect gentleman. An educated, wealthy, handsome Doctor that can cook. Who wouldn’t want that?” Will asked facetiously. “Just don’t ask what the meat is.” He joked grimly.

“If, for example, Agent Crawford were to express an interest…?” Bedelia asked.

At the thought of Jack looking at him like that, Will curled his lip in disgust, “Ugh, Crawford? I’d rather go back to prison.”

Bedelia gave him a pointed look. Well, she looked at him with those dead eyes of hers.

“That doesn’t mean I’m attracted to Hannibal.” Will tried to backtrack, “I’m just saying that, objectively, if anyone had to choose between Hannibal or Jack following you around like a lovesick puppy, most people would pick Hannibal.”

Bedelia didn’t say anything. That wasn’t the question she asked and they both knew it.

Will deflected, “You know that he told me the other day that if he saw me forever that’d he’d remember that time? I mean, who says that?”

“Strong statement. How does that make you feel?” Bedelia asked dully, as if bored.

Will fought the urge to roll his eyes.

-

It was almost ironic that Will ended up with the only psychiatrist that could care less about him. She was stuck with a patient she didn’t want and he was stuck with a psychiatrist he didn’t want. Perhaps it was out of some deluded sense of loyalty that Bedelia agreed to have these sessions. Or, perhaps, it was out of fear. Or curiosity. Or maybe all of the above.

But, as much as Will hated to admit it, she was good. There was a reason Hannibal picked her to be his psychiatrist after all.

He thought back upon what she had last said.

After their banter about the subjectiveness of ‘feelings’, Will had asked (demanded) to know how Hannibal can recover his memories.

“The question is, Mr. Graham, is why you would want him to remember,” Bedelia had replied.

“I need him to know,” Will said.

“Yes, you’ve said that, but why? For what purpose? To what end? To bring him back will put us all at risk.”

Will rolls his eyes. Of course, Bedelia is always looking out for herself. He’d commend it as a smart move if he didn’t find it so self-serving.

“Just because a beast goes into hibernation doesn’t mean he won’t wake up.”

“But why hasten it?” Bedelia argued. She was not eager to have the old Hannibal back.

“Do you want to be the one to let the tiger out of the cage or wait til he breaks out?” Will said.

Bedelia sighed. She knew that Will was right and relented.

“The first sense that is developed is touch. And it is also the one most hardwired into our brain.” Bedelia explained. “Stimulate his memories by having him kinesthetically do something most prominently featured in his mind palace.”

Will frowned. Surely, she cannot mean… “Are you telling me to have him–”

“Take it however you like,” Bedelia quickly cuts him off before he could finish the question, “As long as I’m not involved.”

-

Inside the small office that was attached to the lecture hall, Will laid out all the photos that had a connection to the Chesapeake Ripper. He had even dug up unattributed victims that weren’t displayed based upon the victim’s profile. Now that he knew the Chesapeake Ripper so intimately, it wasn’t difficult to determine which additional victims belonged to the man.

The problem was, the Hannibal he knew now wasn’t a killer. He didn’t have the childhood trauma to do so. Or at least he didn’t remember it. The question whether or not he was inherently predisposed to murder… Well, that’s something Will was going to find out.

The question was who. Who was Hannibal going to kill? Obviously it had to be someone rude. But what makes a person rude? The definition of ‘rude’ varies from person to person

depending on their tolerance. For all intents and purposes, Will should've been dead a long time ago. Instead, the opposite happened. The Chesapeake Ripper fell in love with him.

Will stared at the photos again, trying to decipher the commonality between all of them.

He asked the pictures, "What makes you rude?"

"An amalgamation of cultural and personal etiquette and convention," came a reply.

Startled, Will looked up to see Hannibal in front of him. "What - what are you doing here?" He hadn't heard him enter through the heavy double doors of the lecture hall at all. The man certainly didn't forget the skills associated with his serial killing.

"You missed dinner," Hannibal said.

Will looked at his watch. 9:56PM. "Shit, sorry, I'll go let the dogs out," he said as he hurriedly swept all the photos and printouts into a messy pile to jam into his messenger bag.

"Will, take your time -" Hannibal started.

"What do you mean take your time? It's way past their dinner time and they definitely need to go potty and -"

Hannibal stilled Will's anxious hand with his own, "Will, I've already taken the dogs out and fed them."

The only things Will could do was blink stupidly, "You did?"

"Yes, they're my charges too."

“Thanks,” Will said with a weak smile. His poor dogs had to endure long stretches of being cooped up inside the house when Will had been unexpectedly called away or when he accidentally zoned out - which happened embarrassingly more frequently than he’d have liked. Usually it meant coming home to a messy house and a sense of guilt at leaving the dogs alone for so long, but this time he didn’t because he had a partner helping him take care of the dogs. A partner… that was something he had never had before. Someone to help shoulder the burden, look out for him, care about him.

“I was concerned when you didn’t come home that you had been taken by your … admirer,” Hannibal said with disdain as he looked down at the photos.

“You could’ve called,” Will said with a huff, reminding himself of his Reckoning, and stuffed the rest of the files into his bag.

“I did.”

Will frowned and pulled out his cellphone to prove that he received no such phone call. He blanched. 9 missed calls from Hannibal and 2 from Jack. He had forgotten to unmute his phone after his therapy session with Bedelia.

“When you didn’t answer, I called Jack who confirmed that you were still at Quantico.” Hannibal picked up a photo of a victim who had his tongue cut out and left on a bus. His lips quirked downward in disapproval. “However, had I known it was that this was what had you so preoccupied, I might’ve come sooner.”

Will rolled his eyes. Amnesiac Hannibal wasn’t as good at concealing his emotions. He zipped up his messenger bag and said, “Look, we know that he’s sending me… murder valentines so I need to figure out who his next victim is so I don’t end up with another dead body. And all I know right now is that he kills the rude but I don’t know exactly what his definition of rude is.”

“If only the next dead body is his,” Hannibal said in response.

No freaking way. Hannibal wanted to kill his alter ego. All this time Will had been trying to figure out what person would annoy Hannibal enough to incite him to murder, when it turned out the perfect victim would be the killer himself.

This changes things.

In his best attempt to radiate calm, Will slowly tilted his head as if in consideration, “And how exactly do you intend for *that* to happen, Doctor Lecter?”

“Please, Will, we are residing together, we can do with the formalities.” Hannibal said, steering the conversation to another topic.

Will stared at the amnesiac for a moment before hoisting the messenger bag onto his shoulder. “Let’s go home,” he said with a smile, “I’m starving.”

Hannibal beamed at him and held out a hand, “Your chariot awaits, my dear.”

As much as Will wanted to roll his eyes and scoff at him, he forced himself to smile. He even patted Hannibal on the arm to drive the message home. To which he got the dopey lovesick look that he had intended. Because he needed Hannibal to be head over heels for him in order for his **new** Reckoning to come to fruition.

Will smiled. Maybe this wouldn’t be so hard after all.

Chapter 9

It wasn't the mass murdering that was the problem with the Chesapeake Ripper. In fact, as a fellow art lover, Hannibal could appreciate the beauty in the pieces. There was a certain macabre elegance and lurid symmetry in each of his kills. Perhaps, Hannibal mused, in another life he could even consider the man a friend.

No, the problem was the fact that this Chesapeake Ripper was courting Will. **His** Will. And that simply would not do.

It didn't matter to him that Will wasn't gay. Whether or not they engage in fornication was irrelevant (though Hannibal would very much prefer that they did). All that mattered was that they belonged **only** to each other. Besides, in spite of not remembering his past, Hannibal knew he was not the type to back down from a challenge. Anything worth having wasn't easy.

The gorgeous blue eyed adonis seemed to be entranced by the Chesapeake Ripper, spending too much of his time and energy on the killer. He was all that Will would talk about and Hannibal wanted Will's focus on himself. Which meant that he needed a grand gesture, because that worked for the Chesapeake Ripper. With each kill dedicated to Will Graham, the recipient had been pulled in even further.

So far, Hannibal has only managed small gestures. Caring for his dogs, cooking for Will, helping him locate the Muralist. But it wasn't enough. He needed to do something big. Something that showed how much the man meant to him, that he'd do anything for him, that that was all he ever wanted.

Short of murder, Hannibal struggled to determine what grand gesture he could do. It wasn't that he necessarily was opposed to murder from an ethical and moral point of view, but more so that he didn't want to be a mere copycat. No one wants an imitation in lieu of the real thing. Not to mention that Will hated the Ripper. Sure, it was a fine line between love and hate, but that route was far too circuitous. And there are more means of influence than just violence.

That being said, small gestures were still important. And with the decisive click, Hannibal snapped shut the glass Tupperware container and packed it into his insulated bag.

-

“Doctor Lecter,” Jack greeted in pleasant surprise, “What are you doing here?”

Jack was alone in a conference room. It was an austere space, plain off-white walls, mottled gray carpeting, with a large rolling whiteboard at one end.

“Hello Jack, Will had requested my presence,” Hannibal replied. “He said that there was a young woman who might be in need of my assistance.”

Jack frowned, “The doctors have signed off on your condition so soon?”

“They have not.”

“I can’t let you treat her when you’re not accredited.”

Will enters the room without knocking, “He’s not. Treating her as a patient.” He was wearing his glasses, as he usually did when in any confined space with Jack Crawford. It was his shield, small and brittle, against Jack’s demanding personality.

“Explain,” Jack commanded.

“Miriam has been through a trauma, resulting in memory loss-” Will started to explain.

“So what? He’s here as a support group?” Jack’s tone had noticeably shifted when he addressed his profiler. “That’s what you’re here for. You’re the only two survivors of the

Ripper."

"You know you can have more than one support group, right?" Will sniped right back.

Of course his darling had claws.

Jack started to rise from his seat, "Will, you are -"

"If I may interject here," Hannibal said, wanting to cool things down before anyone got too heated. "I believe what our dear Will is trying to say is that this 'Miriam Lass' has experienced a multitude of trauma and that she could benefit from someone who is able to understand each specific aspect."

Jack smiled. "Well, when you put it like that, Doctor…"

Will rolled his eyes.

"As for psychiatrists," Jack continued, "Doctor Frederick Chilton will be in later to assess her mental state."

"Chilton?!" Will practically shouted, his face twisted as if he'd smelled something putrid.

Though not as overtly, Hannibal shared Will's displeasure for the man. A couple of days prior, he had paid Hannibal a visit while Will had been at work. The meddlesome little man had been too eager when inquiring about Hannibal's well-being. It was a clumsy attempt at psychoanalysis and Hannibal could see right through him.

"Yes, *Doctor* Chilton, Will," Jack said, "he's the only option left after you alienated Alana and with Doctor Lecter temporarily out of commission."

Will groaned dramatically, “He’s literally the worst one. You’d’ve been better off with a dog. At least dogs have been scientifically proven to lower stress levels. And I know from personal experience that *Chilton* does the complete opposite.”

“You’re a pretty stressed out guy for someone who has 7 dogs though,” Zeller said as he entered through the door that Will had left open.

“Yeah, but imagine what he’d be like if didn’t have any,” Price said as he and Beverly followed in behind.

-

Jack leads them to a small room containing the recently rescued Miriam Lass. She had spent nearly a week at the bottom of a well and was half-starved. It was evident that during her long tenure as the Ripper’s captive that she had been well taken care of. It was only in the past week that her condition deteriorated. The team had taken too long to determine where the bacteria found in her severed arm originated. But it has been a busy week.

It was obvious that the room was also an interrogation room. The large mirror placed on one wall was clearly a two way mirror and knew that his conversation was being observed. For what reason Will wanted him to meet with Miriam, he wasn’t sure, but it pleased him to know that Will had his eyes on him.

“Hello, my name is Hannibal Lecter,” he introduced himself to the hollow cheeked, one-armed young woman. She was wearing clothes that wasn’t her own, obvious from the misshapen way it hung on her thin frame. “I heard you have been through quite the ordeal. Personally, I find solace when consuming well prepared dishes. Hence the term, comfort food. Which, I know, varies from person to person depending upon their upbringing - and that I have only just met you - but this particular dish is the favorite of someone I care deeply for. I hope I’m not overstepping when I assume that there are certain universal dishes that all Americans consider ‘comfort food’. A pasta casserole baked in a mornay sauce comprised of 8 different types of cheese.”

Miriam scrutinizes the dish before her, understandably wary. “You brought me mac ‘n cheese?” She asks.

Normally, Hannibal would find such a comment irritating, even rude, but it reminded him of darling Will and that made it endearing.

“Yes,” Hannibal said and presented her with an antique Tiffany fork wrapped inside of a white cotton napkin.

The young woman scarfed down the meal and complimented, saying that it was the best meal she could remember having. The tactic worked, and she opened up to Hannibal as they discussed their amnesiac status. They both had retrograde amnesia, though Miriam’s was only limited to the past few years when she was held captive and Hannibal’s affected his life in entirety, and bonded over their diagnosis. But, unfortunately, she was unable to recover the thought process that had originally led her to the Ripper.

-

It had been 5 days since Will had been staying with Hannibal and the profiler had only brought provisions enough for 3. Though Hannibal would be more than happy to purchase anything that the profiler may need, he knew that this gesture would not be received happily and that Will would misinterpret it as charity.

So, they were on their way (Will reluctantly allowing Hannibal to chauffeur him) to Wolf Trap to pick up more items. While Will proceeded to shove what appeared to be random handfuls of clothes into his duffle bag (Hannibal tried to fold the clothes but was vehemently shot down), Hannibal lurked around the kitchen. He was trying to gain some insights into Will’s food preferences - perhaps what the poor boy considered comfort food. But based upon his findings, he didn’t have much hope.

The most expensive item in Will’s fridge was a carton of pasture raised eggs amid the sea of expired condiments and questionable cheese. Hannibal never purchased individually packaged sliced cheese but he was fairly certain it didn’t come in the blue cheeses variety.

In less than 15 minutes, Will announced, “Ok, let’s go.”

Hannibal closed the door of the fridge and turned to him, “Are you sure you have everything?”

But a knock at the door prevented him from hearing Will’s response.

Will went to answer it while Hannibal decided to linger in the shadows in case he needed the element of surprise. He didn’t question why his mind immediately went into predator mode, but it felt the most logical. After all, Will was his to covet and protect.

The voice behind the door immediately made Hannibal bristle. Not because the speaker was someone to fear but because he was really annoying. The man was begging Will to let him in, a privilege that Hannibal already determined should belong solely to him… and the dogs.

Though there had been nothing in Will’s voice that suggested that something was amiss, the intruder’s persistent attitude made Hannibal step in. To his surprise, standing covered in blood with a hand keeping pressure to a poorly bandaged shoulder was Frederick Chilton. The ingratiating man immediately blanched - even more so from his blood loss - when he saw Hannibal.

“What is he doing here?” Chilton demanded.

Hannibal’s lips minutely turned downward, it was the second time today that someone had asked that question of him. It should be universally known that wherever Will Graham is, so is Hannibal Lecter, the two an inseparable pair.

“What happened to your shoulder, Frederick?” Will asked, ignoring the man’s question.

“Miriam shot me! She thinks that I’m the Chesapeake Ripper!” Chilton said, trying desperately to elicit sympathy.

Will said nothing.

Turning back to Will, Chilton pleaded, “You gotta help me, Will.”

Will took a moment, crossed his arms and leaned against the door jam, “Why?”

“Because you know what it’s like to be framed by the Chesapeake Ripper.”

“Why should I help the person who had me behind bars?”

Chilton reeled back slightly, “What? What are you saying?”

Will took a deep breath and settled more comfortably against the door jam, “I’m saying that you’re the one who planted the evidence, Frederick. You’re the Chesapeake Ripper.”

“You’re crazy! I’m not the Ripper!” In desperation, Chilton turned to Hannibal. But he must’ve seen something in Hannibal’s eyes because, before he could even argue his case, the little man turned and bolted into the woods. An unexpected course of action based upon the look of shock on Will’s face.

Still leaning against the door with his arms crossed, Will said to Hannibal with an expectant look, “Well, what are you waiting for? Go and get him.”

And Hannibal was off. Hurtling towards the forest like a man on a mission. This could be the big gesture he had been searching for. He walked briskly under the cover of the trees, taking unhurried steps towards his prey. The scent of blood was strong, the poorly bandaged shoulder leaking blood and leaving an easy trail to follow. For a man accused of being the most preeminent serial killer of the past century, Frederick was clumsy and maladroit. The sounds of his footfall could be heard crashing through the leaves.

All too soon, Hannibal caught sight of the alleged Ripper. The man was cowering behind a couple of bushes. Careful to not step on my leaves, Hannibal silently approached Chilton, not

giving away his position until it was too late.

“Hannibal!” Frederick gasped, he looked petrified. Certainly not the look Hannibal was expecting a prolific serial killer to have.

“Frederick.” Hannibal took a step closer and Frederick scrambled backwards. “I have to admit, I am finding it rather difficult to believe that you are the Chesapeake Ripper.”

“That’s because I’m not! I’m being set up!”

“By whom?”

“The real Chesapeake Ripper, of course!”

“And whom might that be?”

“He’s lying, he’s the Ripper,” Will said as he emerged from the trees. Hannibal didn’t even hear him coming. Will’s footsteps were as quiet as his own.

“Th-that’s not true! Will, why are you doing this? You know it’s not me!”

“Miriam Lass shot you, Frederick. She said it was you. Are you calling her a liar?”

“It’s not true! Hannibal, you believe me, don’t you?” Frederick turned to Hannibal in hopes that the doctor could save him.

But when Hannibal turned to Will for direction, the BSHCI director bolted, stumbling towards the woods again.

Acting on instinct, Hannibal tackled him to the ground. Up close, Hannibal could see how poor the stitches were in Frederick's shoulder. The man couldn't have been a very good medical doctor. And the fighting techniques that he employed were almost laughable. His punches were obvious and weak, his kicks were little more than uncoordinated flails, and the man had no defenses.

"The Ripper is right there, Hannibal. This is your chance to get rid of him." Will said, his dark eyes sparkled from the stars in the unpolluted night sky.

"Kill him."

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“But Hannibal doesn’t kill him,” Will said, throwing up his hands in exasperation.

Bedelia raised her eyebrows. Will must be really frustrated if he stopped masking his words with double entendres and innuendo.

“I thought you said that if he did a murder that he’ll regain his memories.”

“If you recall, what I said was that his memories *could* be stimulated if he were to kinesthetically do something–”

“Featured in his mind palace,” Will finished for her. “Yeah, yeah, I remember.”

He flopped down into Bedelia’s designer cube armchair. It had an unsupportive back, rigid armrests, and was very uncomfortable. Perhaps that was the point. Dr. du Maurier had said repeatedly she wanted to retire.

Will sighed, he had been so close to getting Hannibal to regain his memories. All he had to do was something he used to think a lot about. What better than doing some murdering to bring back memories of a cannibalistic serial killer? Other than eating human meat, of course.

Will stilled. Oh no, what if that was what Hannibal needed to do in order to unlock his blocked memories? With Mr. Not-Murder over here, now considerate of laws and whatnot, that would mean that Will would have to be the one to… ‘harvest the meat’. Though he could try to get some from the morgue, but that would require a fresh body and most of the dead they found had been dead for a while. Not to mention the travel time it would take for them to get there further expiring the body. Well, except for that mushroom guy. But it wasn’t like there was an assembly line of killers with that particular M.O.

“You do realize that Hannibal’s recreational activities are not so… singular,” Bedelia said in that exhausted drawl of hers, breaking Will’s train of thought. “For example,” she continued, “Many have called him a modern day Renaissance man, an academic, and a patron of the arts.”

“Patron of the arts?” Will repeated. “So, what, I should take him to an art exhibit or something?”

“Might I suggest opera?”

Will groaned. He did not like the opera.

-

It wasn’t that Will didn’t like opera per se, but he just didn’t like theater in general. You had to get all dressed up and drive all the way out there. He’d rather just watch a movie in the comfort of his own home. Plus, opera had an added level of pretension by always being performed in the original language. We’re not all polyglots, Will thought to himself. Evidently only elitist serial killers had the time to learn multiple languages.

Will took a sip of his coffee and grimaced. It wasn’t good. After the disastrous chase through the woods, Will declared that the Ripper had been caught and that he was going home. He had said it more to punish Hannibal than anything. The look of disappointment was almost enough satisfaction in itself. However, the satisfaction was short lived and after 3 days back with his dogs in Wolf Trap, Will was loath to admit it, but he missed Hannibal. If only for his coffee and food, at least, that’s what he told himself. Deep down inside though, Will knew that he missed the man’s companionship and soothing presence. He always knew what to say and what to do to make Will feel better. And, truth be told, it wasn’t easy taking care of 7 dogs alone. Especially when Jack pulls him in on cases in which a bird flies out a dead body. That was a new one.

With Chilton in jail and no new Ripper murders, it was easy to make the assumption that the correct man was in custody. And since it didn’t seem like Hannibal wasn’t going to regain his memories anytime soon and was faring well without them, Dr. Chen had approved

Hannibal's return to office. It was further reason that Will needed to get back to his own home. Now, with Hannibal back to work, it gave Will some breathing space. Though it had felt nice when Hannibal's world revolved around him. It felt like he was cared for. Like he was more than just a speck in the universe. Like his purpose wasn't just to save lives. It felt like he really mattered. Even if it was just to one person.

Too bad Will was a vindictive little bitch.

Right on cue, the doorbell rang.

-

After eating an early dinner with Hannibal, Will had cooked this time, Hannibal drove them to the Baltimore Opera House. Despite Will's disdain for dressing up, he still dug out his best suit - a modern fit navy blue suit with notched lapels, trimmed his beard, and styled his hair. Of course, Hannibal went all out. The amnesiac cannibal had been so thrilled when Will invited him to the opera that he went and got a new tuxedo made. He had offered Will the same, hoping to get matching tuxedos, but Will shot him down. There was no way he was going to spend hours standing on a pedestal while someone poked and prodded him with needles. However, Hannibal managed to guess correctly in Will's suit choice and was wearing a crushed blue velvet tuxedo with a black bowtie.

Will had cut it close on time purposely to avoid any unnecessary socializing so when they arrived, they went directly to their seats. Their seats were in the Grand Tier section, which was a section behind the parterre and two sections behind the orchestra. He would've preferred a box but they were all sold out since he bought the tickets so last minute.

Will sighed and tried to settle into his seat. He wished he had drank more during dinner. On the other hand, Hannibal seemed to be positively brimming with excitement and unbridled joy. It was almost tangible.

"I hope you enjoy this, because this will be the last time I ever come to the opera," Will muttered to Hannibal, already forsaking any possibility of pleasure before the show ever had begun.

Undeterred, Hannibal continued to smile, “They say it’s not the journey but who you journey with. And, Will, I’d be happy grooming dogs and sweeping floors as long as it’s with you.”

A flood of emotions engulfed the younger man. It was one of the sweetest things that he had ever heard. But he had no time to process it as the lights began to dim and the stage lights came on.

Luckily, for the stupid Americans, the opera had been translated into English. Götterdämmerung, was the last installment of the 4 part opera series titled The Ring Cycle or Der Ring des Nibelungen and loosely based upon Norse mythology. It was written by Richard Wagner and debuted in 1876. The second part of the series was where the infamous Ride of the Valkyries song had come from.

Hannibal, being the urbane and cultured man that he was, was already familiar with the opera and spent the time watching Will. A few rows back and to the left of them, was Franklyn Froideveaux, who was watching Hannibal watching Will. And beside Franklyn, was Tobias, who watched Franklyn watch Hannibal watch Will. The only person actually watching the opera was the one who said he didn’t like opera, Will.

When Will bought tickets, he didn’t bother to check what the show was about, he just bought the next available show. He didn’t expect that Götterdämmerung would be so beautifully dark and, surprisingly, relatable to his own current situation. He was captivated.

The villain of the story is a nefarious old man, as they always are, who breaks up a happy couple in order to obtain a ring of power. This old man, Hagen, tells a brother and sister to marry Brünnhilde and Siegfried so that they could rise in social standing. However, Brünnhilde and Siegfried are in love with each other. Hagen says he can help break them up if they give him Siegfried’s ring of power. They agree.

So, Hagen concocts a potion that makes Siegfried forget Brünnhilde and fall in love with the sister. The brother manages to successfully poison Siegfried and convince him to get the ring of power that he had given to Brünnhilde. Disguised as the brother, Siegfried goes and takes the ring right out of Brünnhilde’s hands.

When Brünnhilde sees Siegfried with the sister, she is furious and accuses Siegfried of sleeping with her and thus breaking an oath he made to the brother since Siegfried had

promised not to touch Brünnhilde because the brother wanted her as his bride. Siegfried, still under the poison's spell, swears upon a magical sword that he "never loved Brünnhilde". Brünnhilde then adds that if Siegfried is lying then he must be killed.

While on a hunting party, Hagen restores Siegfried's memory and he recalls how he first discovered Brünnhilde and awakening her with a kiss. Using this as evidence that Siegfried broke the oath, Hagen stabs Siegfried in the back. As he lays dying, he only has thoughts of Brünnhilde.

The brother then tries to take the ring from Siegfried's dead body but is killed by Hagen, who wants the ring for himself. That is when Brünnhilde enters, transmogrified after experiencing the pain of betrayal and her lover's death, and she is furious at learning the truth. She sets the hall on fire and rides into it, to join her lover in death.

Memory loss, love, betrayal, murder; it was like these elements were taken directly from Will's own life. But it was not a happy ending. If Brünnhilde had not been so bent on vengeance and not forced an amnesiatic Siegfried to swear upon his life then perhaps things could've turned out differently. If she had been confident in her lover and realized that his inability to recognize her was a sign of something more malicious at play, then, perhaps…

-

"Hannibal!" A woman who looked to be in her mid-sixties called out over a couple of dozen people who were mingling in the parlor after the show. Like the opera house, the parlor was decorated in a contemporary baroque style with dark patterned wallpaper, golden chandeliers, and deep red carpeting.

The two stop to watch the woman wearing an expensive gown motion to her companions to stay there and then walk over. She had on a long close fitting evening gown that showed off her lean body and was wearing long white silk gloves that went up to her biceps with jewelry over them. People parted and tried with unsubtle eyes not to watch. Based upon their deferential demeanor, the woman was in a position of power.

"Hannibal," the woman said when she finally made her way to them, "I heard about your accident. Are you alright?"

“Never better, the past few weeks have been the best I’ve ever had,” Hannibal replied, smiling warmly as if he knew the woman. “How have you been Ms…” He held out a hand to indicate that the woman should supply her name.

“Mrs. Komeda,” she said and put her hand in Hannibal’s in a courtly handshake, her four fingers perpendicular to his. Hannibal politely touched his lips to the back of her hands in greeting. “Oh, Hannibal, so it really is true.”

“I’m afraid it is. But do not fret, I have been under the most excellent care by dear Will over here.” Hannibal drew an arm around Will’s waist and tugged him closer to the conversation. The younger man had been edging backwards during the whole encounter. “Will, meet Mrs. Komeda.”

Will gave Hannibal an unimpressed look, “I know.” *I was right here when she told you* , was left unsaid.

Mrs. Komeda held out her hand to Will. He didn’t want to kiss it, nor did he want to be rude, so he shook it.

Mrs. Komeda smiled, unbothered, and easily adapted to the handshake, “And how do you two know each other?” She asked once she withdrew her hand.

“He is my emergency contact,” Hannibal said proudly with a big smile.

“Emergency contact, huh? That means you’re someone he can count on. And usually reserved for family.”

“Will is family,” Hannibal said and put his arm around Will’s shoulders.

He was so confident, so pleased to say that. Hearing that made Will feel… weird. It was an emotion he was unfamiliar with. Something that made him feel queasy and warm at the same time. He felt like he belonged.

"Oh," Mrs. Komeda said, "I believe there is someone trying to get your attention." She shifted her gaze to the someone behind them.

Chapter End Notes

I do good. I post another chapter. Please like and comment. I promise I read all of them.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Hannibal turned to see who the intruder was, Will also turned inwardly and Hannibal's hand was forced to fall from Will's shoulders to acknowledge them. To his irritation, it was Franklyn, who, surprisingly, had a friend with him. They were both in black tie, tuxedos custom and tailored - the expense wasn't surprising considering how much Hannibal charged per session. Franklyn wasn't a man of deprived means.

"Hello," Hannibal greeted the irksome man. Franklyn wasn't rude, he had waited politely to be noticed after all, but he was annoying.

"Hello Doctor Lecter," Franklyn replied, as eager as always.

"And how do you two know each other?" Mrs. Komeda asked, always wanting to know where the pieces fit. It was important to note what rank a person had in her social circle.

"I'm his patient."

There was a collective cringe amongst the rest of the group. It was uncouth. But Franklyn didn't notice.

"This is my friend, Tobias. Are you Doctor Lecter's friend?" Franklyn asked Will, purposely introducing his own friend to pave the way for further requests for the other man's identity. It was hard to believe that a man wearing such a cheap suit could possibly be the doctor's friend.

"We came together," Will replied in lieu of actually answering the man. Although the statement was rife with innuendo, he still hadn't decided where he and Hannibal stood with each other, so he said the statement plainly. No suggestive smirk or eyebrow to belie further meaning.

“Will is Doctor Lecter’s emergency contact,” Mrs. Komeda added. She was an emotionally intelligent woman, having had to navigate the political waters of high society, and had noticed the regard Hannibal had given Will. She knew that this remark would earn her points with the doctor.

“What did you think of the performance?” Hannibal asked.

“It was good, great. We, uh, actually sat behind you, you know?” Franklyn said, still trying to recover from the news that this scruffy man held such a position in the doctor’s life. Didn’t that woman at the cheese shop say something about dark haired scruffy men? And what did he mean by ‘came together’? Was that subtext or did they simply come see the show together? But if it was the latter, then what does it imply of their relationship. Franklyn was so confused.

“We know,” Will scoffed.

“What did *you* think of the performance, mister…” Tobias was staring at Will.

Hannibal didn’t like the way Tobias was looking at Will. There was something possessive in the other man’s eyes. And Will was *his*.

“Will. I don’t like honorifics, mister…”

Hannibal wanted to smile at the way Will turned the tables around on Tobias, but he didn’t like the way Will looked at Tobias either. Will looked at Tobias like he was … interesting.

“Budge! His last name is Budge. Tobias Budge.” Franklyn blurted and Tobias glared at him. It stopped the verbal foreplay he had been trying to initiate with Will. Hannibal felt a suggestion of appreciation for the awkward man.

“Well, *Will,* what did you think of our amnesiatic protagonist, Siegfried? You were the only one who kept their eyes on the stage. Franklyn’s kept wandering to Doctor Lecter… who had *his* eyes on *you.* ”

It was a cheap move to throw Franklyn under the bus.

Will took a sip of his champagne and waved his hand in an imitation of an arrogant academic and said flippantly “Losing one’s memory doesn’t excuse someone of their actions, past or present.”

“Sounds personal,” Mrs. Komeda said. She took a sip of her champagne and looked at Hannibal. She was ready for another performance.

Taking the opportunity, Hannibal said, “In the third part of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* , titled *Siegfried* , the eponymous hero falls in love with Brünnhilde at first sight. I know that if it were me with my memory erased, I’d fall in love with the same person at first sight all over again.” He made sure that his eyes were on Will for the last sentence.

Will scoffed, feigning disbelief, but his blushing face and red ears gave his true feelings away.

“You must be speaking from experience,” Mrs. Komeda said.

“It kind of reminds me of Lord of the Rings,” Franklyn said, desperate to change the topic and for some attention.

“Yes, Franklyn, the Valkyries were essentially hobbits… aside from the fact they were immortal women and winged.”

“See, Tobias gets it.” Franklyn said happily, not seeing the man roll his eyes.

“Siegfried's betrayal and death were necessary for her to become all-knowing and completely free,” Will said, completely ignoring Franklyn.

“It was only after she condemned Siegfried was Brünnhilde able to ascend,” Tobias said.

“Who says Asgard is above us, some translations say it’s in the center of the world,” Will challenged.

“Valhalla is where fallen warriors get to spend a glorious afterlife. To be a great warrior, that person would have fought many battles, slain many. Murder was required,” Tobias was being agreeable. He was trying to get on Will’s good graces. Hannibal did not like that.

“They don’t call it murder on the battlefield,” Will argued.

“What do they call it?” Mrs. Komeda asked, ever curious, ever stoking the fire of drama.

“Patriotism.”

“What about when Brünnhilde killed herself to join Siegfried in death?”

“A bit dramatic, don’t you think? I doubt real life is like that,” Will scoffed and finished his champagne. He nearly choked when Hannibal said,

“I’d die with you, Will.”

-

If anyone were to say that Hannibal was a man capable of singular focus, they would be correct. It was evident by his mastery of medicine, cuisine, language, art, that when he

wanted something that he was disciplined enough to achieve it. That being said, the situation with Will Graham was something of a paradox to him. On one hand, Will had invited Hannibal to the opera, in fact, the man had even purchased the tickets himself. Then, on the other, Will had been so eager to go back home and leave Hannibal. And despite the constant rejection and dismissals of Hannibal's admiration and attentions, Will kept reaching out to him. They spoke everyday, usually in person and over a meal, but if Will was busy, they'd talk on the phone.

Their interaction following the days after the opera had been, unfortunately, the latter of the two. The absurd murder of a woman with a bird in her chest was revealed to be one in a serial after Will had discovered the burial location of 15 other women. After that, his conversations with Will had been constricted, almost abstract. Will had asked a lot of hypothetical questions regarding the admissibility of a witness with a serious brain injury. That if a licensed psychiatrist were to validate this neurological impairment, would the testimony stand? And what kind of stress would that have on such an individual if that person were to be cross examined?

His darling Will was distressed about this latest case and Hannibal so desperately wanted to take some of that strain off of Will. Whether it be emotional support or physical - with the way the younger man carried tension in his shoulders and neck, Will could do with a massage from expert hands. Dexterous hands that had anatomical knowledge and knew all the right pressure points. Fingers that could trail down the splenius capitis muscle to the trapezius, working out any knots along the way. Then lower to the rhomboids of that fine velvety skin and–

"What do you think I should do, Doctor Lecter?"

At the mention of his own name broke Hannibal out of his reverie and he was transported back to his office sitting across from his most trying patient, Franklyn Froideveaux. Dressed in a plaid 3 piece attire that Hannibal knew was in a mimicry of his own style. The man had been catastrophizing something again, and, as rude as it might be, Hannibal hadn't been listening. But Hannibal was astute enough to not make it appear so.

Without pause, his face not betraying his inattention, Hannibal asked, "What do *you* think you should do, Franklyn?"

“I knew you were going to ask that,” Franklyn chuckled, as if his ability to predict Hannibal was an indicator that he and his therapist had the same thoughts and thus one in the same.

Hannibal inclined his head to urge Franklyn to go on.

“I mean, it’s kind of weird, right? I googled him and they don’t even have anything in common. Tobias is an expert in stringed instruments and classical music. He’s refined, well-educated…”

Hannibal started to let his mind wander back to his beloved again.

“And Will who thinks like a serial killer.”

The mention of Will’s name brought him back.

Something must’ve slipped through Hannibal’s impenetrable mask because Franklyn said, “I know he’s your friend, Doctor Lecter, I don’t mean any offense by it, but it just seems strange to me is all.”

A slurry of insults ran through Hannibal’s mind. *Who are you to comment on the beautiful mystery that is Will Graham? How dare his name grace your lips!* And *It would be inconceivable that a man as insipid as yourself could even begin to fathom the complexities behind such an alluring being.*

But, Hannibal needed to know more about Tobias’ intentions and ridiculing Franklyn would not serve that purpose. So, with an inward sigh, Hannibal asked instead,

“We are not here to judge others nor fall victim to questionable sensationalized media but to understand your feelings on the matter. Tell me, Franklyn, why do you think Tobias is interested in Will?”

“Um… I’m not sure… that’s what I’ve been trying to figure out.”

“Perhaps it would be helpful to analyze some of the things Tobias has said about him.” *Tell me what that scoundrel has said about my darling.*

“Uh, well, Tobias didn’t exactly say anything about Will. He just asked me about him.”

Hannibal waited.

“Like… he asked me if I had ever seen Will before. And if you two were, uh, dating. But, that’s impossible, right? I mean, I read that he was your patient. And you said that it would be unethical to have a relationship outside of the office with your patients.”

“This is reason why you shouldn’t believe the words of a tabloid journalist, Franklyn,” Hannibal reprimanded. Of course he had read that same disparaging article written by the now deceased Freddie Lounds. It was impossible to ever really delete anything from the internet. Though he did not remember the relationship he had prior to his memory loss, it was unfeasible that his prior self kept it strictly professional with Will. “Furthermore, Will was never my patient.”

“Wha– but–.”

“Now, what else did Tobias ask?”

“Uh– I– uh, um…” Franklyn paused and struggled to process the implications of Hannibal’s statement. It was clear that he wanted to know more about Hannibal’s relationship with Will but he also didn’t want to be reprimanded by the doctor for not heeding his earlier direction. The rotund man took a deep breath. “Tobias did ask me about dogs– cause, you know, my mom breeds show dogs. He didn’t say it was because of Will, but I saw pictures online that he had a lot of dogs and Tobias never really liked animals. One time, I invited him to my mom’s dog show and he told me that he’d rather listen to me play the violin than endure a second being trapped in a room filled with those slobbering hairy creatures. Which I’m not sure was an insult since I’ve been taking violin lessons for the past 8 years. Not from Tobias,

of course. He said that it would ‘have ramifications on our friendship’ if he were to teach me.”

This was unacceptable. One only explores subjects they are uninterested in for the sake of another so that they have something in common to discuss and enjoy together. No, this would not do at all. The irony of Tobias doing the same thing that Franklyn had done in pursuit of Hannibal’s friendship was not lost upon him.

“I see,” was all Hannibal was capable of saying while he tried to rein in his anger.

-

As Hannibal drove, he pondered what was the best method in ridding them of Tobias. Hannibal had inquired more about Tobias and learned that he owned a string shop in Baltimore. It wasn’t that he felt threatened by Tobias, per se, but he hadn’t missed the inkling of intrigue from Will when had been speaking to the man after *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and Hannibal didn’t like sharing Will’s attention.

Perhaps he could sabotage Tobias’ business. But Will wasn’t a man driven by financial incentives. Or perhaps he could uncover some unsavory details about Tobias’ past. There was something about the man that told him he had some bodies hidden in his closet.

All those thoughts vanished the moment Hannibal approached his driveway and saw a familiar forest green Volvo station wagon parked in front of his house. *Will* .

As sudden as the changing of the tides, Hannibal’s concerns and worry drifted away. After parking his car in his garage, he was met with the enticing aroma of someone cooking. The scent of butter, flour, bell peppers, onion, paprika, cayenne, wafted through the air, but before he had a chance to fully identify all the different smells, the chef in question came into view and all other thoughts evaporated.

Always a sight to behold, Will was standing in front of the large stainless steel gas burning stove stirring a bubbling stock pot, the kitchen fan on high for ventilation. There was a

partially cut onion on a cutting board, several used bowls in the sink, and a bag of shrimp on the marble countertop. But none of that mattered because Will was there.

“Good evening, Will. What a pleasant surprise,” Hannibal said.

Without looking up from his task at hand, Will replied, “Hey Hannibal, you’re right on time. Dinner’s almost ready.”

“Anything I can assist with?” Hannibal had already taken off his jacket and begun rolling up his sleeves.

“Nah, I got it. Why don’t you set the table?”

“Very well,” Hannibal said and pushed his sleeves back down. He had been hoping to cook together with Will or at least start the clean up, but that wasn’t what Will had asked of him.

For his obedience, Will deigned to grace Hannibal with a smile. Turning his head and looking at the doctor sweetly. Hannibal would do anything for that man.

“Shall I decant a bottle of wine to pair with?” Hannibal suggested.

“Sure, pick something that goes well with Cajun spice,” Will said.

It was a special occasion, the first time that Will had truly made himself at home in Hannibal’s house, so the doctor had chosen the Scully & Scully Regency Turquoise place set and paired it with the Tiffany & Co. golden Olympian Gold Vermeil flatware set from 1878 . For the wine, he chose a 2001 Domaine Weinback Gewurztraminer Alsace Grand Cru, an off-dry white wine that worked with all spicy dishes, poured into Baccarat white wine glasses . Although he knew that the price point of the luxury tableware would be lost on Will, Hannibal could not help himself. His darling deserved only the best. Whether it was appreciated or not wasn’t an issue.

“I made gumbo,” Will announced when he ladeled the stew into the gold filigree turquoise bowl.

“Bon appetit,” Hannibal said and brought the spoon to his lips. It wasn’t an overly technical dish. Will had opted for a single pot preparation style, likely how it was made in his childhood, but it was made with love. Which, love, Hannibal considered, was an actual component of a dish. It was part of presentation and no one could deny the difference between a home cooked meal made by someone you love compared to that of a busy restaurant.

But there was something curious about the ingredients Will had used. The vegetables, seasonings, stock - Hannibal could identify. It wasn’t until his second bite that Hannibal realized what was the meat he was eating.

Hannibal took another bite before he put down his spoon and gingerly dabbed his mouth before speaking. It would be unsightly to speak with sauce around his mouth.

“This is delicious,” And it was, Hannibal could tell that it was a recipe that had been well honed and practiced.

“Thanks.” Will smiled.

Oh, if he could bottle up that smile and savor it until the end of times, he would. But he still had a question to ask. Perhaps he didn’t know. Perhaps he had an unethical butcher.

“If I may ask, where did you procure your meat from?”

Will’s smile of pride morphed into a devious smirk. “I hunted the pig myself.”

“Will, this is human,” Hannibal was in shock. Surely Will’s pig must’ve gotten mixed up when the meat had been processed.

“I know,” Will said and casually swallowed another spoonful of the gumbo.

Chapter End Notes

I promise I read all the comments! More comments = faster chapter updates

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Did you kill him, Will?"

What do you think? Will thought to himself. But he was done with obsfcation and vagaries. So he simply said, "Yes," and took another bite of the human gumbo.

It was funny really. Hannibal looked so shocked for a man whose preferred meat choice was human for the past lord-knows-how-many decades. The man's face seemed to undergo a series of emotions. From surprise to confusion to consideration.

Will chewed as he watched Hannibal. It had finally come to this. Will did what Hannibal always wanted, for him to kill - deliberately. The lengths that the man had undergone to get him to this point, all that effort he'd put in, Abigail, Garrett Jacob Hobbs, Marissa Schur, Abel Gideon, Frederick Chilton, The Judge, and he doesn't even know that he got what he wanted. The old Hannibal would've been thrilled.

Will almost wistfully sighed, but he caught himself in time. Did he actually *miss* Hannibal? No, that's ridiculous, there was no way he'd miss that megalomaniac who fucked with his head while he was suffering from a life threatening infection, let him have seizures, isolate him from his peers, and put him in an insane asylum to be pricked and prodded by doctors.

But, it was hard. It almost felt unfair that he was treating this innocent amnesiatic Hannibal this way. He didn't know what his past crimes were. It was like when training a dog, there is no point if the dog doesn't understand what it did wrong.

Plus, this NewHannibal was so patient and nice. He was trying so hard to get on Will's good side, despite everything Will had tried to convince him otherwise, New Hannibal didn't give up. And with the way the man kept looking at him, Will was starting to really believe that this Hannibal was actually in love with him.

So, it shouldn't have been too much a surprise when Hannibal asked, "Would you like me to be your alibi?"

The doctor then scooped up another spoonful of the gumbo, appraised it, and then ate it without further hesitation.

Will was speechless. His mouth hung slightly open, his spoon midair. Did Hannibal really just offer to be his alibi for him? Allowing himself to be an accessory? By the way Hannibal was now languidly eating the gumbo as if it were just another meal, his money was on yes.

That was when Will lost it.

Will slammed his spoon down on the table, some remnants of gumbo splattering on to the mahogany dining table and on himself. "Are you fucking serious?" Will tried not to shout. "First of all, don't you think it's weird that you are able to recognize the taste of human flesh?"

Ever so polite and restrained, Hannibal put down his spoon, dabbed his mouth with the linen napkin and said, "80% of taste comes from smell. As a former emergency room surgeon, I must've caught a whiff of burning human flesh at some point. Likely on your Independence Days."

"Really? People burning themselves with fireworks?"

Hannibal shrugged, he took a sip of the wine as he waited for Will to continue.

"And you're just so cool with me murdering that you're willing to, not only be a cannibal, but also lie to the cops and risk going to jail?"

"True love is unconditional. I would do anything for you, Will."

Hannibal set the wine glass down on the table and looked at Will with that look of his. That intensely possessive and determined look. It was a look that made Will feel strange feelings. Power, thrill, anxiety, anticipation. A feeling of adrenaline coursing through his body. A giddy feeling of nausea.

Will took a sip of the wine to steady himself. A little dry and a little sweet. The perfect pairing to a spicy stew.

“Then why didn’t you kill Frederick?” Will asked, much more calmly now.

Hannibal blinked and reeled back slightly, mirroring Will’s calm. His piercing gaze subdued. “I thought that was a test,” he said.

“What? How?”

Hannibal shrugged and picked up the wine glass again, he swirled it as he spoke, “I’m uncertain for what purpose but I’m aware that you’ve been analyzing my behavior.”

Will must’ve made a confused face because Hannibal continued, “The Muralist, Miriam Lass, the opera,” he listed, “I assumed chasing Frederick and scaring him was what you wanted. That having him suffer the same fate that he put you through at the hospital would be far more apropos.”

“What goes around comes around,” Will said.

As much as Will hated to admit, Hannibal was right. Having Chilton locked up in the same hospital he had been in charge of less than 24 hours prior was far more amusing. A quick death would’ve been too easy for him. Will wanted to watch him squirm.

“My point exactly, Will.” Hannibal smiled and sipped on his wine. “If I may ask, what is the purpose of these tests? Not that I’m complaining, of course, I enjoyed the opera and this gumbo is superb, but why feed this to me?”

That was when Will realized that Hannibal had been going along with all his obvious attempts of subterfuge simply because he wanted to spend time with him. It was sweet. Maybe he should just tell Hannibal that he was doing all this in hopes that Hanniabl regains his memories as the Chesapeake Ripper and that he needed to do Ripper stuff, like murder and eat people, to do so. The jig was up, as they say.

Ding dong!

Will and Hannibal took their eyes off each other for a moment to look towards the front door. Hannibal placed the napkin from his lap onto the table and excused himself to go to the door.

But Will didn't excuse himself. He got up as soon as Hannibal did and followed a few steps behind as they walked to the foyer. As Hannibal placed his hand on the doorknob, Will ducked to hide in the shadow of an antique redwood grandfather clock and out of the line of sight.

When Hannibal opened the door, he was cordial as ever but Will could see the tension of extreme displeasure in Hannibal's body at the sight of his unwelcome guest.

"Good evening, Mr. Budge," Hannibal said.

-

Earlier that day…

It wasn't until 2:30pm that Professor Graham had a moment to get lunch. He had been busy working with Jack on yet another case and had fallen so behind on his classes that he had been forced to stay late after his lectures to answer student questions. When he reached his limit on social interaction, he excused himself by telling his students that he had to go get something to eat. The students seemed surprised at that statement, asking why his husband hadn't brought him lunch like usual.

That led Will to give another lecture (rant) about observational skills and inference. Namely the fact that there was no ring on his finger and none on the lunch maker's either. And that bad judgment calls can have serious repercussions, potentially fatal ones, for F.B.I. agents. If they ever make it out of the academy. And considering their poor emotional quotient, it was looking more and more unlikely that they would even graduate.

Irritated and hungry (and missing Hannibal more than he'd like to admit - only the man's cooking), Will was even more annoyed when another unwelcome person approached him.

Lingering beside Will's Volvo station wagon, out of place but trying to appear as if he belonged, was Tobias Budge. The front desk must've been doing their job today because Tobias hadn't been granted visitor access to the Quantico campus and had only made it as far as the parking lot.

"Will, what a surprise running into you here," Tobias said casually with a smile. The man was wearing a suit, only a two piece but it was fashionable and finely made. Definitely not off the rack.

Will glared at him, "No, it's not." The man must think Will an idiot if he thought he'd believe that civilians could actually chance upon one another in a federal law enforcement facility.

But Tobias simply chuckled, "You can see right through people can't you? What a fantastic mind you have."

Will rolled his eyes. He didn't care if he was being rude. He was hungry and tired. He had been up all night.

"What do you want?" Will asked irritably. Tobias was standing between him and the Volvo's driver's side door.

"There's no need to rush this, Will. We're more alike than you might think."

Will doesn't say anything. There wasn't anything to say. Tobias wasn't saying anything that necessitated a reply. The less he talked, the faster the conversation would end.

"We had an interesting conversation at the opera, didn't we? A sacrifice in order to ascend," Tobias paraphrased what Will had said of Brunhilde condemning Siegfried to die so that she may undergo her final transformation.

But Will remembered what he had said, eidetic memory and all, and he had remembered what Tobias had said too. No need for a refresher. So he kept silent.

"I followed you to the graveyard the other night," Tobias said, ending the pleasantries and finally getting to the point.

Shit. Will hadn't noticed nor did he look out for someone following him. He should've though. But he had hoped, if anyone had been following him, it would be Hannibal. Unfortunately, it had been another serial killer. Still, he didn't want Tobias to know that he'd been caught off guard, that would give him the upper hand.

"I visited the basement of Chordophone the other night," Will said, mimicking Tobias' own declaration. "After hours," he added.

After their encounter at the opera, Will had a 'feeling' about Tobias and decided to pay a visit to Tobias' stringed instrument shop (Will had always had a knack for breaking into places). And his intuition proved correct. Lengths of intestine the size of which could only be human hung all around the padlocked basement in various stages of the curing process. There was even a partially strung violin on an antique cherrywood table that Will could not help but run a bow across.

Tobias looked surprised but proud. He puffed out his chest and asked, "What did you think?"

Will closed his eyes for a moment, remembering the sound when he pulled the bow against the human gut violin strings. *The resonance and the timbre was much deeper and richer*

compared to the sound of synthetics he had previously heard before. Will pulled on the strings once more in a low chord. It sounded like a dying man's groan. A death rattle.

When Will opened his eyes again, he saw Tobias staring at him. Wide eyed and fascinated.

"I can still hear the melody in my mind," Will said as tonelessly as possible. He didn't want the man thinking he was complimenting him.

Unfortunately, Tobias looked pleased. "You must let me play for you sometime."

"Why?" Will narrowed his eyes at him.

"We share a common hobby, you and I."

"So? That doesn't make us friends."

"Why not? I understand you, Will. And you, me. Who else can understand you like I can? Certainly not that dilettante psychiatrist you were with at the opera."

You have no idea what Hannibal is capable of. Will thought to himself. *Though, unfortunately, neither does Hannibal.* He added with an internal sigh.

After his visit to Cordophone, Will had debated whether or not to kill Tobias but another ultimately won out for that honor. The situation with Clark Ingram had proved to be untenable and a more pressing matter. If Will didn't act quickly, the asshole was going to pin it all on poor Peter Bernadone.

By no means did Will consider himself a hero, but he especially hated it when people took advantage of those with mental deficiencies. Something about that made his blood boil and see red. Probably due to personal experience. So, Will killed Ingram and buried him in a graveyard. He wanted to display the body, he already had envisioned how he would do it, and it would've been beautiful. But the risk was too high. Jack and the other detectives already

heard Will's disdain and accusations of the man. Plus, if he displayed the body like the Ripper, Chilton would be exonerated and released. And that ignominious little man hadn't spent nearly enough time behind bars being examined by his own sadistic staff.

"Is that what you think of Hannibal?" Will asked.

"He's just a connoisseur, a man like that doesn't know how to get his hands dirty… like us, Will. Imagine what we could accomplish together." Tobias said.

Unlike weak, sniveling Frederick Chilton, who rolled over as soon as Hannibal looked at him, Tobias would fight. This would force Hannibal to fight back. A fight, Will hoped, that would ultimately lead to someone's death. Ideally, it would be Tobias', but if Hannibal were to be killed by this subpar serial killer, then perhaps he wasn't the Ripper that Will had known him to be.

Will doubted it, of course. Even without his memories, Hannibal's killer (literally) instincts were powerful and formidable. He had seen how he tracked Frederick through the woods, quickly and stealthily. Hannibal moved so quickly that Will struggled to keep up, even with his intimate knowledge of the woods that he walked his dogs through everyday. And he had seen Hannibal with a blade. So, Will invited Tobias over to Hannibal's for dinner.

"Why don't you tell him yourself? Preferably after dinner." Will told Tobias and shouldered past him to open the car door. .

He got in without bothering to say goodbye to Tobias or give him the address. Will knew that the man would be following and watching him so he better get his timing right. He didn't want to have the dinner he worked so hard for to be spoiled.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for the comments. I really do read them all. I just don't reply because I'm using that time to write the next chapter! Hope you all like this latest chapter.

Comments = fuel to write faster!

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

> Special shout out to @take_me_up_cast_me_down, your long comment motivated me to write another chapter. I really appreciated that you took the time to write all that. So this one's for you!
>
> (Not to say that I don't appreciate the other comments, I do! It's just been a while since I read a comment.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal stared (glared) at the ebony-skinned man standing on his doorstep. Like their last encounter, Tobias was wearing a custom made suit, this time a two-piece but the quality of the fabric and stitching was nowhere near as precise as his own ensemble.

"May I help you?" Hannibal asked.

The other man's eyes darted around, looking behind Hannibal as if in search of something. Someone, more likely. And recalling the attention Tobias paid to Hannibal's companion that night, Hannibal knew who he was looking for. The thought filled him with a cold fury and narrowed his eyes at Tobias as if he could turn him to stone.

Unfortunately, the man was did not become petrologic and spoke, "Dr. Lecter, I believe that we share a common interest, you and I."

Hannibal internally rolled his eyes at the repetitive phrasing of the man's statement. It was already implied by the pronoun of 'we' that he was referring to the two of them, the 'you and I' add on was superfluous. Like the man himself.

"The opera?" Hannibal posited, purposely playing dumb. It was always better to let them underestimate you.

“No, no,” Tobias chuckled, “A certain individual. A forensic profiler to be specific.”

Tobias tried to peer into Hannibal’s home once more. But the hallway beyond the foyer was dimly lit and he couldn’t see beyond it. It was evident he was looking for Will. He must’ve been following Will if he knew that the profiler was inside Hannibal’s house. Why the man in question was hiding, Hannibal wasn’t sure but he knew that his little mongoose was up to something. Will was the one who turned off the lights in the hallway afterall. Instead of feeling irritation or annoyance at the thought of being played, Hannibal felt thrill and excitement. Based upon his scent, Hannibal knew Will was close and watching the scene unfold.

“Perhaps you’d like to come in to discuss this,” Hannibal stepped backwards to grant the man entry.

“Thank you.”

Hannibal led Tobias into the kitchen, for lack of options. He’d have directed him into the dining room, or perhaps the study, but he wasn’t sure where Will was lurking. A door separated the kitchen from the rest of the house and Hannibal hadn’t heard its hinges swing while he was talking to Tobias.

“Would you like a glass of wine?” Hannibal offered, the bottle that he had decanted for his dinner with Will was still there.

Tobias, expectedly pompous, recognized the label. “Domaine de la Romanee-conti, an exceptional Grand Cru.” He nodded.

Hannibal poured him a glass and handed it to him.

“I have a proposition for you.” Tobias said as he smelled the wine,

Hannibal leaned back against the counter beside the stove, placed a hand in his suit pocket, and drank his wine, languidly awaiting to hear what nonsense Tobias was about to spew.

"An exchange of sorts…" he continued.

Hannibal was offended. "I don't want Franklyn."

Tobias laughed, "Nobody does. I wouldn't propose something like that. That wouldn't be fair. No, what I had in mind was something more valuable. Your life in exchange for Will."

Hannibal laughed, "Perhaps you had forgotten, but I already stated that I would give my life for Will. There is nothing that I wouldn't do for him."

"There are things about him that you don't know, things that you can't even begin to even comprehend."

Hannibal took a moment to appreciate the wine. Then said, "Are you referring to Clark Ingram?"

Tobias froze as he pulled the wine glass away from his face, surprised that Hannibal knew that name.

"I know far more about Will than you do," Hannibal said.

Tobias' face twitched in irritation. "You may think so, but I'm more like Will than you will ever be."

"Being able to discern a Grand Cru does not mark you as an oenophile."

“Maybe not, but I know what makes one. And I know what makes Will,” Tobias took another tip of the vintage.

Before Hannibal could exchange another verbal parry, the kitchen door swung open.

“Jesus fucking Christ,” Will said, striding in like the prize he was. He leaned against the counter, equally distant from both men who had been circling each other by the stove. “Are you two just gonna talk about me all night or are you gonna do something?” Will poured himself another glass and took a sip of the wine. “I mean, this is good wine but I prefer a man of action.”

“What would you like me to do, Will?” Hannibal asked.

Both men looked expectantly at the man in question, eager to obey his every whim.

Will boosted himself onto the countertop, legs dangling, and took a big gulp of the wine before addressing his ardent admirers, “I didn’t have Tobias come for threesome.”

Tobias and Hannibal simultaneously both grimaced. Other than their desire for Will, their possessive nature was another thing they had in common.

“It’s a battle royale, winner takes all,” Will said and leaned back suggestively, his dangling legs parting, “The prize, obviously, is me.”

Hannibal hesitated, “Will…” he couldn’t debase his beloved like he was a piece of meat to be bought and sold.

“Hey, if you don’t want it, I’ll leave with Tobias right now.” Will sighed, “I will be disappointed though.”

“Absolutely n-“ before Hannibal could finish his sentence, Tobias had thrown his glass at him.

Lighting fast, Hannibal ducked out of the way, the glass shattering on the backsplash above the stove.

“That was rude.” Hannibal straightened himself and smoothed out the front of his suit and checked his sleeves.

“Were you waiting for a starting pistol? I’m afraid I’m all out of those.” Tobias rushed forward, pulling a violin wire out of his inner suit pocket as he did so, opening his arms wide to hook around Hannibal.

Hannibal hooked his foot on the handle of the oven door below the stove and opened it, forcing Tobias to come to a halt. As the intruder stumbled, Hannibal grabbed a stainless steel French skillet off the peg board to his right and slammed it sideways across Tobias’ knee.

The man buckled but managed to fall backwards and away from Hannibal’s striking distance. As he did so, he whipped out the metal string and lassoed it around Hannibal’s right hand and tugged, the skillet dropping from Hannibal’s grasp.

The steel cord cut into Hannibal’s forearm, but he barely felt it. He pulled back on the tether, in an attempt to throw the other man off balance. But Tobias unspooled some of the wire and Hannibal was the one who had to redistribute his weight to ensure he remained standing.

His darling sure knew how to pick them.

Hannibal knew that this was a kill or be killed situation. It was obvious from the moment that he laid eyes on Tobias at the opera house that the man was a killer. Just as it was obvious that the man wanted his Will.

Tobias had released the wire now and had picked up a filleting knife, not the most sturdy of knives. But obviously the other man was not a chef.

Hannibal tossed the wire aside and prowled forward, it wasn't necessary to use a weapon to subdue this fool. Tobias must've realized the inadequacy of the filleting knife and threw it at Hannibal's chest.

He must've been a juggler in his previous life for Hannibal caught it by the handle. He threw the fillet knife right back at Tobias, who deflected it with his arm, but not without sustaining a cut. Using Tobias' block to his advantage, Hannibal slipped to the side and hit Tobias with a left hook to his face. Continuing the momentum, Hannibal punched him in the gut and the man buckled. Knees hitting the ground.

Will took a sip of the wine, a little bored. It has been too easy, Hannibal didn't even break a sweat. He thought a seasoned serial killer like Tobias would've put up more of a fight. How dull.

Hannibal took a hold of Tobias' neck, ready to snap his neck.

"I abhor rudeness."

But like any action movie villain, Hannibal's vainglorious parting speech gave Tobias the opportunity to turn the tables. While Hannibal was taking the moment to tell Tobias what was wrong about him, the other man had been sliding his hand into his pocket.

ZZZTTTT

Tobias zapped Hannibal in his left hamstring with a pocket stun gun. It wasn't as strong as a police taser or a full sized stun gun, but it was enough to release his grip on Tobias' neck and drop him to the ground.

Oh, now things were finally starting to get interesting, Will thought.

“You think I’d come here empty handed?” Tobias said as he got up, stretching his neck from side to side as he held the buzzing stun gun.

It’s as if villains can’t recognize themselves in the mirror, they repeat the same mistakes, and just like Hannibal, Tobias had gotten too chatty. With his long legs, Hannibal kicked up, his Italian leather, hooking the toe round the large stock pot and knocked the still hot gumbo onto Tobias.

“Argh!”

It was a shame that Will’s dish had to be sacrificed but he’d earn Will’s forgiveness once he disposed of the intruder.

Hannibal did a kip up, and as he did so, he reached his right hand backwards for the T-style stainless steel corkscrew straight into Tobias’ trachea. He rotated his wrist, further twisting the corkscrew into the man’s neck, flooding his lungs with blood.

Reflexively, Tobias dropped the stun gun and reached for his neck. Having learned his lesson his time, Hannibal didn’t speak as he ripped the corkscrew out sideways, blood spurting over his face and suit, grabbed hold of the sides of Tobias’ face and snapped the man’s neck.

The man dropped dead right at Will’s feet.

Will slid off the countertop, carefully sidestepping Tobias’ body and sidled up to Hannibal. They were inches apart from each other. Will looked deep into Hannibal’s eyes, searching. Hannibal was breathing heavily, but he stood still, covered in blood, awaiting Will’s next instruction, hoping for a kiss.

As Hannibal leaned forward, Will hissed.

“Aw fuck, you don’t remember anything do you?”

Hannibal cocked his head to the side. What was he talking about?

Will sighed and scrubbed his face vigorously with both hands.

“She said it would work!” Will stepped back and started pacing, running a hand through his curls. “And after all I went through for this. Damnit!”

Hannibal was confused, “To whom are you referring?”

“Bedelia. She said that if you killed someone that you’d get your memories back.”

From what little interaction he had with the psychiatrist, that didn’t something she would say. “Were those her exact words”

“Well… no, but basically, yeah. She said that if you were to ‘kinesthetically do something most prominently featured’ in your ‘mind palace’ that you’d remember.”

“I see… and that something would be…?”

Will stopped in his tracks and gave Hannibal a bewildered look.

“Murder, obviously.”

“Why?”

Will took a deep breath, he was done with this game, “Because,” he waved a hand around, “You’re the Chesapeake Ripper.”

“Ah.” Hannibal didn’t sound convinced.

“Didn’t you think it was weird that you understood all his tableaus so easily? The head of the BAU had to call on a number of people to analyze the scenes.”

Hannibal supposed that was true, he did understand each reference at first sight.

“And didn’t you think it was more than coincidence to who his last piece was directed to?”

They both did share an unhealthy obsession with a certain profiler.

“Oh.” Despite this discovery, Hannibal still disliked the Ripper and his feelings of possessive jealousy did not wane. “So what now?”

Will sighed again and observed the scene before him. The dead man still bleeding onto Hannibal’s marble floor, the spilled gumbo, and various kitchen tools scattered about.

“I worked hard on that, you know.” Will frowned at the fallen pot of brown sauce.

“I apologize, I had limited options.” It really was a shame, but he hadn’t been prepared like Tobias was with his hidden weapons.

“That’s fine, you can make another.” Will grinned, “And you don’t even have to go far to harvest the meat.”

Chapter End Notes

Please leave a comment. I cannot go on without them.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!